

# PLUS

SUCCEEDING  
TOGETHER

## PLUS PROGRAM EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ACADEMIC YEAR 2019-2020

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### PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND HISTORY

The Program Leading to University Success (PLUS) is an academic support program that first began offering peer-led study groups to students at Eastern Washington University in the fall of 1992.

Study groups are typically offered for 100 and 200 level courses that have been identified as being historically difficult for students based on the rate of D, W, and F course grades received, as well as student and faculty feedback.

In the fall of 2010, contract-based, one-on-one peer tutoring was introduced, and in the winter of 2011, the PLUS program joined the Western eTutoring Consortium (WeTC), providing our students online access to tutors at colleges and universities across the Western United States.

In 2012 PLUS moved to the main floor of JFK Library to serve as a partner in the Learning Commons, a dynamic and free-form student learning space containing moveable whiteboard tables, chairs and rolling whiteboards.

Extended evening hours were added in 2015. In October of 2016, library management was restructured to include the Learning Commons and specifically the PLUS program.

In September 2018, peer academic coaching was introduced as a service students could self-request.



## PROFESSIONAL STAFF 2019-2020

### DIRECTOR

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**Michelle Galey, M.S.**

### RETENTION SPECIALISTS

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**Jossie Brown, M.A.**  
Special Projects  
(Academic Coaching  
and Online Tutoring)



**Caroline Dias, M.A.**  
Tutoring



**Alyson Rode, M.A.**  
Study Groups

### GRADUATE STUDENTS

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**Kelli Knerr:**  
GSA



**Rachel Carroll**  
GSA

## CRLA CERTIFICATION AND TRAINING

PLUS is internationally certified through the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) for tutor training through levels I, II, and III. Each training session covers a student success strategy and best practice that can be implemented and/or shared with peers in PLUS sessions, including but not limited to the following topics:

Time Management	Critical Thinking
Communication Skills	Goal Setting
Campus Resources	Test Anxiety
Active Learning	Learning Styles
Problem-Solving	Study Skills

PLUS student employees are required to complete Levels I and II. To become a certified tutor for either level, they must



complete 10-11 training hours and meet a minimum of 30 student contact hours per quarter. Upon completion of the requirements, the students receive a certificate that can be added to a professional portfolio.

Some student employees choose to pursue their Level III certificate to become a Master Tutor, completing course or discipline-specific resource guides for future peer leaders so they can "pay it forward."

### STUDENT EMPLOYMENT GUIDELINES

#### Requirements

Student employees who apply, interview, and are hired as facilitators and/or tutors through the PLUS program received at least a 3.3 in the course, maintain a 3.0 or higher overall GPA, have sophomore standing or higher, and have received a faculty recommendation. They demonstrate leadership qualities, excellent communication skills, and a willingness to help others.

## **Supervision**

Student employees are directly supervised by one to three retention specialists who coordinate PLUS services. Graduate students may assist as needed.

## **Assessment**

PLUS student employees must attend certified CRLA training sessions in their first quarter of employment to gain proficiency in their peer support role by learning best practices.

To assess whether these best practices are being implemented in learning sessions, retention specialists and graduate students conduct quarterly observations of student employees when they are in a session. A performance rubric is utilized (see Appendix) and an observation follow-up meeting is scheduled for 15 minutes in which the direct supervisor reviews the rubric with the student employee and identifies what went well in the session and what can improve.

Additionally, students attending PLUS sessions are asked to complete an end-of-quarter survey (see Appendix) providing both quantitative and qualitative data on the efficacy and quality of service provided by PLUS. The complete results of each survey are provided to PLUS student employees respectively via email. Any names provided within the comments are removed prior to dissemination.

## **YEARLY PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS**

### **PLUS STUDENT EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH**

The PLUS staff helped determine which student employee (facilitator, tutor, academic coach, office aide) would be recognized as a model employee each month. Recipients received a copy of their PLUS Employee of the Month certificate, had their photo and announcement posted in the Learning Commons, and also had a social media posting on the PLUS Facebook and Instagram sites.

### **Service Presentations and Tabling**

Throughout the academic year, PLUS staff presented on academic success strategies to freshmen student athletes attending Life Skills courses, and in other courses at the faculty member's request. Additionally, they presented on test-taking strategies in all sections of First Year Experience (FYE) freshman seminars in Fall 2019. Professional staff and graduate students also tabled and/or presented at many events on campus, including New Student Orientation (previously firstSTEP), College Migrant Assistance Program (CAMP) tutor orientation, Running Start orientation, Neighborfest, and Admitted Student Days. In addition, PLUS presented to several sororities and fraternities and the EWU football team about college success strategies.

## **Retention Initiatives**

During the 2019-20 academic year, PLUS worked closely with the Center for Academic Advising and Retention (CAAR) to support student success and retention on a daily basis through the implementation and usage of EAB Navigate for reporting, campaigns, and the CCN (Coordinated Care Network).

In addition, drop-in tutoring hours were offered in both the Learning Commons and the residence halls, which allowed PLUS to serve more students. Plans are also underway to pilot supplemental instruction (SI) sessions in courses with high D, F, W rates in the near future. The sessions will look much like PLUS' current study group model; however, peer facilitators will be attending class alongside students, allowing for stronger faculty and student relationships – a key factor in the success of supplemental instruction, as noted by UMKC (University of Missouri-Kansas City).

## **Covid-19 Pandemic**

When the COVID pandemic emerged, PLUS transitioned all of its services to online within two weeks, offering academic coaching appointments and drop-in tutoring via Zoom for Spring quarter. Over 160 drop-in sessions per week for a variety of EWU courses were offered to EWU students.

## **STUDY GROUPS SUMMARY**

Study groups are peer-led collaborative learning sessions for a given course. They occur twice per week (50 minutes each) on a drop-in basis in the Learning Commons of JFK Library or in classrooms across campus.

Content and learning strategies are built into sessions, including a review of lecture notes, textbook readings, problem-solving exercises, and pair- or team-based activities that promote active learning and collaboration. During sessions, students have the opportunity to ask questions and receive feedback.

Student attendees gain confidence in mastering content, develop critical thinking skills, learn how to ask questions of their peers and instructors, and apply new learning strategies. PLUS study groups target courses rather than specific student populations and attract students from differing ability and culture groups.

Students can attend any sessions they choose during the quarter as attendance is not mandatory.

## TUTORING SUMMARY

Students interested in receiving small group tutoring assistance complete a request form on the PLUS website and agree to the terms of the tutoring agreement. In short, they must come to all scheduled sessions on time and prepared with questions and any course materials (textbook, class notes, etc.) that are necessary for the tutor to best assist them.

The tutor and tutees meet two hours a week, which is equal to a 20- to 30-hour commitment for the quarter. A minimum of 15 tutoring hours are required to meet this commitment.

All small group tutoring sessions occur in the Learning Commons. Students are assigned to an available tutor and most communicate via text, email, or phone prior to sessions. Many request the same tutor to assist them in a course sequence the following quarter.

## ACADEMIC COACHING SUMMARY

Academic Coaching can be defined as the one-to-one process of helping a student to assess their current study habits and assisting them in building general, transferable skills for use throughout their academic career and beyond. Coaches provide students with academic support in areas ranging from time management and goal setting to attitude and motivation, as well as a variety of study skills.

PLUS targets several populations of students on campus and specializes in transitioning to college for first-year students, first-generation students, graduate students, students on academic warning or probation, and students who are looking to strengthen the skills they already possess.

Coaches generally meet once per week with students individually. Students are paired with their coach through a self-request form on the PLUS website. Students complete the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) to determine specific academic skills that need further development. Although the LASSI is a starting point for students to identify areas of focus, coaching is very student-driven, so students dictate what they want to work on, and in what order, guided by the coach.

## OUTCOMES FOR PLUS SERVICES 2019-2020

### Outcomes–Study Groups

- Served a total of 1,327 students through study groups with 255 students using the service more than one quarter/semester
- 1,048 unique (unduplicated) students attending
- Accrued 4,658 student contact hours
- Employed 87 facilitators, provided 86 study groups, and partnered with 113 faculty members
- Two CMSD study groups were offered in spring semester (half face-to-face, half online). Basic counts are included in the table below, but some calculations were not, as they are incommensurate with other academic terms.
- Students who attended 5+ sessions per quarter achieved a course grade difference of 0.4 compared to their peers in class who did not attend\* (only fall and winter included)

*\*While a direct causal link cannot be drawn between session attendance and course grades, the results are still suggestive. It is also recognized that motivation may serve as a mediating factor.*

- The PLUS course grade average (5+ sessions) was a 3.0, with the non-PLUS average equaling 2.7 and the overall course average equaling 2.7
- The overall PLUS DFW rate was 12% and the non-PLUS DFW rate\* was 20%

*\*Number of students in course who obtained D, F, and W grades relative to total number*

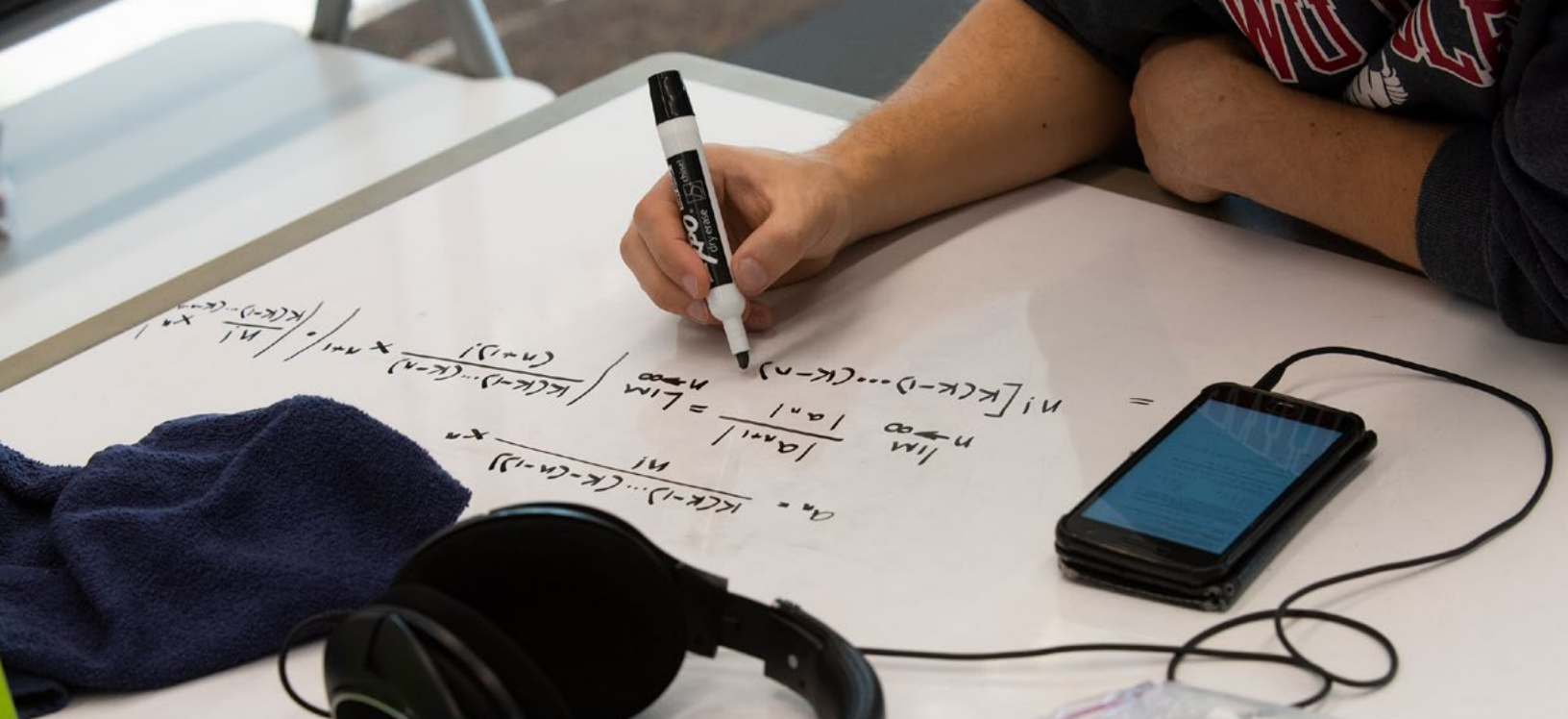
- Due to the hurried transition to online learning in spring quarter 2020, PLUS Study Group facilitators were assigned drop-in tutoring shifts via Zoom teleconferencing in lieu of regular study groups. Note that Spring 2020 numbers are mostly absent from the Study Group Summary table, as this alternate service was provided.



“My tutor was amazing. She helped me better understand everything; chemistry is a hard subject especially at Eastern and she helped shield the blow.”

— End of Quarter Survey Response, Fall 2019





## 2019-2020 PLUS STUDY GROUPS ACADEMIC YEAR SUMMARY

Category	Fall 2019	Winter 2020	Spring 2020 <sup>◇</sup>	Total
# Total Individual Students Served <sup>■</sup>	736	545	46	<b>1,327</b>
# Individual Students Served*	651	479	20	<b>1,150</b>
# Total Unique Students Served <sup>◆</sup>	679	489	20	<b>1,048</b>
# Faculty Assisted	58	53	2	<b>113</b>
# Group Facilitators	44	41	2	<b>87</b>
# Total Study Groups Offered <sup>■</sup>	47	44	2	<b>93</b>
# Study Groups Offered	43	41	2	<b>86</b>
# Study Group Sessions	846	733	40	<b>1,619</b>
Student Contact Hours	2,548	1,912	198	<b>4,658</b>
% Students Attending Study Groups*	17%	13%		<b>16%</b>
PLUS (All Attending) Course Grade Average	2.9	3.0		<b>2.9</b>
Non-PLUS Course Grade Average	2.5	2.7		<b>2.7</b>
Course Average	2.7	2.8		<b>2.7</b>
PLUS (All Attending) Grade Difference	0.3	0.3		<b>0.3</b>
PLUS (5+ Sessions) Course Grade Average	2.9	3.1		<b>3.0</b>
Non-PLUS Course Grade Average	2.5	2.7		<b>2.7</b>
Course Average	2.7	2.8		<b>2.7</b>
PLUS (5+ Sessions) Grade Difference	0.4	0.4		<b>0.4</b>
% PLUS DWF Rate	12%	9%		<b>12%</b>
% Non-PLUS DWF Rate	23%	17%		<b>20%</b>

\* Of the students enrolled in courses included in the analysis

<sup>■</sup> Includes low attendance study groups and incompletes (ended early in quarter)

<sup>◆</sup> Unduplicated

<sup>◇</sup> Only Spring Semester 2020 for CMSD courses – all Spring Quarter 2020 PLUS services were moved to online drop-in because of the pandemic and stay-at-home orders.

## OUTCOMES – TUTORING

- Served \*656 individual students across commitment-based, drop-in, and WeTC tutoring, with 138\* students using the service more than one quarter
  - 601 unique (unduplicated) students attending
  - Maintained 447\* active contracts out of 578 total (77%)
  - Employed 105\* total tutors
  - Accrued **6,865\*** student contact hours across all tutoring services
  - **82%** of students who met contract received a passing grade of 2.0 or higher
- \*based on Fall 2019 & Winter 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Spring 2020*
- Due to the hurried transition to online learning in spring quarter 2020, PLUS tutors were assigned drop-in tutoring shifts via Zoom teleconferencing in lieu of regular small group appointment-based sessions. Note that Spring 2020 numbers are mostly absent from the Tutoring Summary table, as this alternate service was provided.

“\_\_\_\_\_ is an amazing [facilitator] ...is always 200% prepared, is committed to helping us, and is just generally a great person. She helped me a lot and she made the study group a welcoming place to learn”

– End of Quarter Survey Response, Fall 2019

## 2019-2020 TUTORING ACADEMIC YEAR SUMMARY

Category	Fall 2019	Winter 2020	Spring 2020*	Total
◆ Total Individual Students Served	360	296		<b>656</b>
Total Tutor Matches	206	241		<b>447</b>
Total Number of Commitments*	295	283		<b>578</b>
Total Number of Requests Received	409	467		<b>876</b>
Total Drop-In Students Served (in person)	85	50		<b>135</b>
Total WeTC Tutoring Students Served	56	47	31	<b>134</b>
◆ Total Unique Students Served	292	309		<b>601</b>
Total Number of Tutors	55	50		<b>105</b>
◆ Total Contact Hours	3,349	3,516		<b>6,865</b>
Total Drop-In Tutoring Hours	157	90		<b>247</b>
Students Who Met Commitment**	120	106		<b>226</b>
Students Who did Not Meet Commitment***	86	135		<b>221</b>
Met Commitment with Passing Grade	93	92		<b>185</b>
% Met Contract with Passing Grade	78%	87%		<b>82%</b>
Dropped Tutoring After Week 2	60	68		<b>128</b>

◆ Includes small-group commitment, drop-in, and online tutoring through WeTC

\* Includes duplicates & drops

\*\* Does not include duplicates or drops

\*\*\* Met commitment is equal or greater than 15 hours



## 2019-20 ACADMIC COACHING ACADEMIC YEAR SUMMARY

Category	Fall 2019	Winter 2020	Spring 2020	Total
Total Number of Requests	108	106	68	<b>282</b>
# of Coaches	17	17	15	<b>49</b>
# of Commitments	93	88	43	<b>224</b>
*# of Commitments Met*	55	55	23	<b>133</b>
% of Commitments Met*	59%	63%	53%	<b>59%</b>
# of Commitments Not Met*	38	33	20	<b>91</b>
% of Commitments Not Met*	41%	38%	47%	<b>41%</b>
# of Drops	32	19	20	<b>71</b>
Student Contact Hours	492	476	232	<b>1,200</b>
# of Students on Academic Warning/Probation**	2	26	3	<b>31</b>

\*Met commitment is equal or greater than 6 hours. It's important to note that many of the students who did not meet the 6 hour commitment might have only requested assistance for a particular issue, such as Zoom help, time management, or technology assistance.

\*\*Warning students have received a GPA of <2.0 for the term in their first year at EWU; probation students have a cumulative GPA of <2.0.



“PLUS is awesome! ... Everyone at PLUS (tutors, desk workers, management, and everyone in between) have been wonderful and very approachable. My tutors help me understand the content I am learning and they help keep me accountable since I know they will be there. This is a wonderful program that I intend to use until my time at Eastern is over ”

– End of Quarter Survey Response, Fall 2019

### OUTCOMES–ALL SERVICES

In total, PLUS served the needs of **2,341** students at Eastern Washington University

- 1,569 unique unduplicated students
- 611 duplicate students used more than one PLUS service

In total, PLUS accrued **13,017** contact hours

**177** students completed our end-of-quarter surveys (fall and winter). Our response rate was **10%**.

- The average response to the question, “I leave PLUS learning sessions feeling better about the material and my own abilities” was a **4.1/5**
- The average response to the question, “PLUS learning sessions are helping me to improve my grade” was a **4.1/5**
- The average response to the question, “I am satisfied with PLUS program services and my experience with them” was a **4.3/5**

Due to the hurried transition to online learning in spring quarter 2020, PLUS Study Group Facilitators and Tutors were assigned drop-in tutoring shifts via Zoom teleconferencing in lieu of regular academic support services. Note that Spring 2020 numbers are absent from Summary tables for Study Groups and Tutoring, as this alternate service was provided.

- **134** total students served
- **294** contact hours

### CONCLUSIONS

Every year the PLUS team seeks to improve the delivery of academic support services to students at EWU. We continue to see steady interest and growing demand for the use of PLUS services. Increased marketing at freshman and transfer student events, as well as referrals from campus partners and fellow students, helps to maintain student awareness and exposure of services.

PLUS continues to maintain a strong partnership with the Center for Academic Advising and Retention (CAAR) in developing retention initiatives.

The continued support of executive level administrators at EWU is an integral part of maintaining the quality and quantity of support we provide to students. This includes professional development opportunities on and off campus at conferences, committees, and so on.

We continue to shape and reshape our program into the 2020-21 academic year, being mindful of the student success and completion initiatives to be implemented as part of the EWU Strategic Plan.

During the 2020-21 academic year, PLUS will continue its mission to serve students through a variety of services, including offering virtual sessions for all offerings so that students can receive the support they need even during the pandemic.