

What is tutoring? SUNY Potsdam Faculty share their thoughts...

Whelehan/Anth: TUTORING PROVIDES AN OVERVIEW OF THE KEY CONCEPTS PRESENTED IN CLASS AND AN EXPLANATION OF WHAT KINDS OF INFORMATION ARE NEEDED IN EXAMS AND PAPERS. IT IS NOT A REPLACEMENT FOR CLASS ATTENDANCE OR READING REQUIRED MATERIALS AND IT IS NOT UP TO THE TUTOR TO BE THE PROFESSOR .

Smith/Psyc: TUTORING IS A SUPPLEMENTAL FORM OF INSTRUCTION, COMPLEMENTARY TO INSTRUCTION COMPLETED BY THE CLASSROOM INSTRUCTOR, WHOSE PURPOSE IDEALLY IS TO HELP THE TUTEE OBTAIN CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS AND OTHER INFORMATION THAT WERE COVERED IN CLASS OR IN OUTSIDE READINGS (TEXTBOOKS, LAB MANUALS, WEB SITES, ETC.). TUTORING SHOULD NOT BE SEEN BY THE TUTEE AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR ATTENDANCE AT ALL REGULAR CLASSES, NOR AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR COMPLETING ALL ASSIGNMENTS, NOR AS A WAY FOR THE TUTEE TO OBTAIN AN UNFAIR ADVANTAGE IN HELP WITH HER/HIS HOMEWORK OR OTHER ASSIGNMENTS. TUTORING SHOULD BE SECONDARY TO, AND IN CONJUNCTION WITH, OUT-OF-CLASS ASSISTANCE PROVIDED FOR THE TUTEE BY THE COURSE INSTRUCTOR DURING OFFICE HOURS.

Suchy-Pilalis/Music: Tutoring should provide assistance with understanding concepts and mastering techniques. Tutoring should provide and help build tools/resources for accomplishing projects/skills in the course. Tutoring should never provide answers but help students develop methods to arrive at the answers independently.

Scherzer/Psyc: Tutoring is to help students understand material presented in class or in the text. Tutoring should not be writing or correcting a student's paper - a tutor may offer suggestions on how to improve a paper, or talk through a rough spot with a student, but I have seen tutors typing papers for students - a definite no-no.

Duprey/Educ: A tutor is a person who can help students to understand or master the objectives set by the instructor in the course. A tutor is not someone to do the work for you and is not your teacher for the class. A tutor should be used in addition to your regular attendance to the class, never in place of attending the class.

Neisser/Pols: A tutor is a teacher, and it is not easy to put into words what it is to be a good teacher. Above all, the tutor must respond to the student. Does the student need additional deadlines, with assignments maybe broken into smaller pieces with a due date for each, so as to show each one to the tutor and discuss? If that is what the student needs then that is what the tutor needs to do. On the other hand, maybe the student needs to say out loud what the content of the readings/course material is, and the tutor should make that the opening event in each session. Or maybe the student needs advice about how to study (e.g., how to take notes when reading a difficult answer -- some people remember only when they write as they read). Maybe the professor has a particular way of doing things or a particular set of expectations that the tutor can explain, as in "This is what Dr. so-and-so wants." In many cases what professors expect is that the student achieve some OVERALL understanding of the meaning of an essay, chapter, book, play, etc. The student needs, then, to figure out how each part of the content -- each fact or topic or line-- connects to the others, and what it adds up to. This really does require reading the selections from end-to-end, with understanding. Sometimes all a tutor needs to do is encourage/pressure the student to read in that way. For some students this will mean stopping often

to go back and re-read, so as to never read something without a sense of what went before. This is new for many of our students, meaning those who look for the "important" details or facts, without bothering with the rest, thinking to selectively memorize for a test.