

## HONORS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROJECT PROPOSAL FORM

Complete this proposal **prior** to your project's start date and upload it in the UHP Database (<https://webapps.uc.edu/uchonorsstudent>). Create a project ("Add a new record") in the "Tracking Project" tab and then upload your proposal document as an attachment. Your submission will be reviewed during the next [review cycle](#).

*While the quality of the proposal is most important, strong proposals are typically 3-4 pages in length (single-spaced). Please maintain the proposal format.*

### **Basic Information**

Full Name: Austin F. Menezes

UC Email: menezef@mail.uc.edu

College: McMicken A&S

Major: Biology

Title of Project: Honors Proposal: Peer Tutoring in the LAC

Thematic Area (choose only one): Community Engagement, Creative Arts, Global Studies, Leadership, OR Research

Expected Project Start Date: 01/06/2014

Expected Project End Date: 04/26/2014

### **Project Information**

1. Provide a detailed abstract of your proposed honors experiential learning project.

During the Spring Semester, I intend on being a Peer Tutor in the Learning Assistance Center. There I will be helping individuals in courses such as Biology, Chemistry, Sociology, Psychology, and Statistics, all of which I have successfully completed during my time at UC thus far. While in this position, I will be available in the LAC to assist students seeking help in such subject material with the specific problems they are having.

I have been tutoring students in different subject matter since the 6th grade. These students included foster children and mentally handicapped students, in addition to those who had normal learning patterns, but did just not understand the subject material. From all these tutoring experiences I got a great deal of personal satisfaction knowing that I was able to help each individual student learn something and reach that point of understanding. This is one reason why I would like to continue my engagement in tutoring while in college. The exciting thing that I find about college students is that they take responsibility for their own learning and genuinely want to learn, especially those students who are coming to be tutored in the Learning Assistance Center for help. By being able to help those individuals on their search for knowledge, I know I will feel that same satisfaction that I did earlier. Additionally, this tutoring would help me with interpersonal communications as the constant exercise of trying to adapt my teaching to different learning styles will positively help me in future interactions. This is career relevant as my goal is to be a doctor and one of the main difficulties of doctors is explaining diagnosis to individuals who would not understand the cases or symptoms of that disease otherwise.

In regards to my preparation in the Tutoring program, I will attend all training sessions as directed by the program directors in order to become adequately equipped with the skills necessary to be an effective tutor who offers a safe and nonjudgmental space for students to learn. This training will then continue throughout the semester.

For the entirety of the semester as a tutor, I will be in the Learning Assistance Center (LAC) multiple times throughout the week for approximately ten hours per week available for students to ask questions and provide them with a safe learning environment where they can feel comfortable doing so. This would count up to 150 hours over the entirety of the semester. Additionally, some of my other commitments to the program include maintaining a professional attitude about matters such as class standards, grades, and other student complaints, modeling appropriate professional attitudes and behaviors to all UC staff, faculty, and students, and acting as a representative for the Peer Tutoring program on campus.

**Clearly and thoroughly address how each of the following elements will be exhibited in your work:**

2. Connection to Learning Outcomes within the Honors Thematic Area (identified above)

My participation in the Peer Tutoring Program in the LAC connects primarily to “Possessing awareness of purpose of service, including need for reciprocity, understanding of social issues, and ability to see those issues from multiple perspectives.” Many different types of people come to the Learning Assistance Center for a variety of reasons. My interactions with the different individuals who need tutoring, all of which come from a different background, will allow me to interact with multiple different cultures. Through my interactions with people of different cultures, learning styles, and cultural lenses, I anticipate gaining exposure to different perspectives and understand different perspectives better than I do now. One thing that is often difficult to pick up on is people’s situations. Often we focus on more the task at hand and the information relating to that topic and neglect to recognize other hints towards other’s situations. I will work to promote my awareness for those social issues by attempting to pick up on those subtle hints that people give in order to attempt to better understand people. I will facilitate this by listening to people’s details and reading up and learning about the various social classes and the various attributes towards that group. By doing this I believe it will be easier to recognize the different issues people face and then through the actual interactions with tutees, gain a level of understanding. Additionally, my participation in the Peer Tutoring Program will benefit me by allowing me to better “relate, communicate, and works effectively with others towards sustainable social change.” Tutoring is one job that needs effective communication between both parties. This is often difficult in part due to the differing perspectives of individuals. By being a tutor in the Learning Assistance Center, I will be placed in situations where I have to communicate effectively and work with my tutees to foster that similar understanding between individuals. By being in that position for the entirety of the spring semester and beyond, I believe I will be able to be more effective with my communications and work with the tutee to provide them with the understanding that will allow them to eventually not need tutoring anymore as they learn the skills for self-sustained learning. I will try to facilitate this through my training with the peer-tutoring program. One of the training sessions focuses primarily on the differing backgrounds and learning styles of individuals. By learning these and then attempting to implement them while tutoring, I anticipate becoming more effective in my tutoring across a broad type of people. This learning outcome also links back to my interactions with different cultures and learning those to break down social barriers.

Last, but not least, my commitment to Peer Tutoring will give me the opportunity to “participate in my community, and better allow me to understand my role in the UC community.” I believe that community participation is a vital part of social interactions as a way to give back to the community and be an active participant in a role. Without an active citizenry, there is no possible way for a society to progress. In

order to be a part of a community in which everybody thrives, it is important to for individuals to give back with things that they excel in order to lead to a thriving community. Through my tutoring over the spring semester, I would be able to share my intellectual talents with the community and provide a service to those who are lacking and help them understand the subject matter; I would be giving back to the community in one way that others may not be as able to do. Additionally, during the semester I will be keeping a blog on which people will be able to see what I am doing and then understand what I am learning throughout the process.

3. Connection to Goals and Academic Theories (include reference list, as appropriate)

A. When I think about the potential outcomes, knowledge and advantages I will gain after experiencing work in the LAC, the results are endless and invaluable. First off, being a Doctor requires a wide understanding of different cultures and ideologies and openness to things that are different. Being a tutor and being exposed to the different personalities, learning styles, talking styles, etc. will be invaluable to me as I progress into a career of service towards others. Being able to connect with people is another important aspect that Doctors must possess in order to provide adequate patient care. There is also a necessity to make complex issues more accessible, something that I will be practicing as a tutor. By interacting in Peer Tutoring where connecting to individuals is extremely important, I would be sharpening this skill as I go into a life in the medical career. Additionally, being able to connect to people is a very important life skill. I realized that in order to really grow as a person, in my particular discipline, I needed to open up and step out of my comfort zone and by being a Peer Tutor this would be accomplished.

B. As previously mentioned, there are various workshops and seminars associated with the program that helps individuals gain the skills necessary to be an effective tutor. One of these includes an online training portion in which prospective tutors go through modules each focused on some part of the tutoring process, and learn about being an effective tutor in that specific realm. The modules reference literature as well as online articles and databases. A large portion of the online training materials is drawn from Ross MacDonald's *The Master Tutor*. The purpose of this Online Training is to better understand what the role of a tutor is and how to be an effective tutor, as well as how to relate to your tutees and how to interact with various backgrounds. In addition to this Online training materials, prior to starting as a tutor in the LAC, I will have to go through six hours of in person training with Director of the Program, Stewart Wright. By participating in these programs, I will be strengthening those skills before I go into the actual position so that, come spring semester, I am fully prepared to provide assistance to my tutee in the most effective way. After this is completed there are monthly training sessions in order to continue the learning process and make us more effective tutors.

In regards to my enrichment outside the scope of the program, I will be working with Jessica King to find articles that relate the various social issues with their effects on education. With these further readings I will be better able to understand the situations people are in and become better acquainted with peoples situations and will have a greater understanding on how those issues are related to the education system. Since coming to UC I have heard a good deal about the brokenness of the Cincinnati Public schools and this is one subject in specific that I would like to incorporate into my readings.

#### 4. Initiative, Independence, and/or Creativity

The Peer Tutoring Program is a selective one, which I applied for earlier in the fall semester and was accepted to. There are numerous tutors in the Peer Tutoring Program in the LAC all working towards a similar goal of helping others to learn and promoting independent learning. By choosing to use my experience as an Honors Experience, my goals reach even further. I have been a tutor before, helping students in subjects such as math, history, English, etc. However, for me, part of the purpose of Peer Tutoring is to gain a higher level of awareness and digging deeper into understanding the situations of others. By reading articles suggested by Jessica King regarding socioeconomic class in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as well as the role of social class in education, I will be increasing my perspective and understanding through reading. I will then be able to see what I read in action as I tutor people from all different socioeconomic backgrounds and actually experience and understand better what others are going through. One piece that I discovered independently of the University Honors Program is a chapter from *Social Class and Education: Global Perspectives*. The chapter in it that I focused on is chapter 3, “Race, Class, and Bachelor’s Degree Completion in American Higher Education: Examining the Role of Life Course Transitions.” In this, the author talks primarily about how people of a lower social class typically find it much more difficult to complete a bachelors degree due to the fact that it can be difficult for them to go through as a full time student and support themselves. Because of this, they often end up dropping out or not completing their degree. Weis then discusses how this forms a viscous cycle, as people are not able to escape poverty due to the fact that they have no educational qualifications for higher paying jobs. This similar cycle is then experienced by later generations.

#### 5. Reflection

During my time as a Peer Tutor in the LAC, I will keep an online blog that students will be able to be viewed by current LAC tutors and UC Students that details my interactions with students and my various experiences during my time tutoring. The blog will consist of everything I have learned through the various trainings, information sessions, and tips given to my by more experienced tutors, elders, and the students themselves. Additionally, and I believe more importantly, the blog will detail and reflect upon lessons learned by tutees themselves that I picked up while in tutoring sessions. These include book, as well as cultural, knowledge. All these experiences will be linked to specific instances that I encounter during my time as tutor, and will include details and knowledge gained from these experiences. By writing it down in a reflection blog, I will be able to go back and look at everything I have learned during my time as a Peer Tutor and share my experiences and thoughts with prospective tutors and others in the UC Community. Additionally, the blog will serve me by allowing me to look back towards the end of the project and reflect on what I have learned during my time. After this, I intend writing reflections of my experience detailing how I see power and privilege being reflected during my time tutoring and its relation to educational experiences.

\*everything written about students will be written with confidentiality as required by FERPA.

#### 6. Dissemination

I will work to disseminate my work by putting it together into a short booklet that can be put up in the Learning Assistance Center so that potential tutors will be able to read it and know the benefits that

come with tutoring and will be inspired to apply and tutor. In addition, it will also help to show current tutors some of the things that they potentially have not realized in regards to their tutoring experience.

7. Project Advisor (list the person's name, title, and contact information)

Stuart Wright

Peer Tutoring Coordinator

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Jessica L. King, MA

Assistant Director Academics

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8. Budget (if applicable)

Throughout the spring semester I will be working in the LAC, which will cost nothing to me. I therefore have no budget.