



## Student Support Services Newsletter

### The Student Support Services Peer Mentor Program

The **Student Support Services (SSS) Peer Mentor Program** is a great opportunity for SSS upperclassmen to offer support and encouragement to SSS freshmen. These “students helping students” play a key role in the primary objective of SSS: to promote the academic success of program participants, leading to higher retention and graduation rates.

For this year’s pilot program, SSS Director **Dr. Tammy Russell** selected 6 SSS upperclassmen to serve as Peer Mentors, based on their academic standing (2.7+ GPA), their interest in helping other students, and their involvement on campus—both inside and outside the classroom. Each Peer Mentor works with 4-5 SSS freshmen enrolled in Dr. Russell’s Academic Development & Counseling 101: Introduction to Academic & Personal Development. Currently, 30 freshmen are working

with Peer Mentors. However, Dr. Russell hopes to increase this number in the future.

The SSS Peer Mentors for 2007-08 are **Beth Blazina**, a junior in Secondary Education, concentrating in Math; **Lillian Calkins**, a senior in Fine Arts, minoring in Art History; **Erie Coney**, a junior with dual majors in Criminal Justice and Sociology; **Lydia Dively**, a senior in Special Education, minoring in Early Childhood Education; **Tyler Fenimore**, a senior in Health & Physical Education, minoring in Community Health; **Terrance Green**, a sophomore in Health & Physical Education, minoring in Sport and Exercise Physiology; and **Alyssa Hoover**, a senior in Political Science—Pre-law.

This newsletter overviews the Peer Mentor Program and introduces the SSS Peer Mentors .

### SSS Peer Mentors “Give Back” to Students

According to SSS Director **Dr. Tammy Russell**, the Peer Mentors’ assistance through individual and group meetings with SSS freshmen makes them an important on-campus resource. Not only do the Peer Mentors serve as good role models, but they also help students to deal with the change and transition of integrating into a new culture. Mentoring is especially important for SSS students—who are the first in their families to attend college.

The **SSS Peer Mentor Program** is based on a combination of proven models from the University of South Carolina’s **National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition** (<http://www.sc.edu/fye/>). Its mission is “to support and advance efforts to improve student learning and transitions into and through higher education.” Indeed, the better Peer Mentors are at facilitating support for first-year SSS students, the more successful these students will be in college.

For this reason, Peer Mentors attend staff meetings to discuss student progress and work together to develop academic, cultural, and social

activities. So far this semester, the Peer Mentors have introduced SSS freshmen to intramural sports, encouraged contact with academic advisors, sent reminders of important dates on the academic calendar, and made referrals to University Tutorial Services, the Smart Center (Math & Science), Writing Center, and the SSS Writing Specialist, **Ms. Julie A. Story**. Also, by talking with freshmen and answering questions, Peer Mentors have shared their experiences and provided advice, helping SSS freshmen become acclimated to college life.

For their hard work coordinating activities and mentoring SSS participants, Peer Mentors receive full textbook support through the **SSS Book Loan Program**. In addition, Peer Mentors benefit from positively shaping students’ transition experiences, developing leadership and group facilitation skills, networking with faculty and staff, and seeing students succeed. In sum, they gain excellent resume experience.

However, Peer Mentors also enjoy their work because they want to “give back” to new SSS students.



# SSS Peer Mentors

**Beth Blazina** is a junior Secondary Education Math major with a minor in Mathematics at the Middle School. Beth received Dean's List recognition in Fall 2005 and 2006. She works with SSS students on their math homework and gives them study tips to better understand their classes. Beth helps students in the on-campus SMaRT Center (Science Mathematics Resource Technology Center), is Secretary of the Math Club, and plays Intramural Volleyball. At home, she spends time with her husband and children.



**Lillian Calkins** is from New Jersey but has lived in Pennsylvania most of her life. She is majoring in Fine Arts with a 2-D specialization and a minor in Art History. On the Dean's List every semester, Lillian's goals are to be a certified art educator and to pursue a master's degree in Art Education. On campus, she loves the art department and has found college to be very challenging, engaging, and fun. Lillian says, "I've appreciated the help and encouragement I've received from SSS and would like to 'give back' the same to others." In addition to enjoying the arts, Lillian loves being a parent to her 15-year-old daughter.



**Erie Coney, Jr.**, from Miami, Florida, is a junior majoring in Criminal Justice and Sociology. He became a Peer Mentor because he wanted incoming freshmen to have a better transition into college—as he did as an SSS freshman. Erie belongs to Pi Lambda Phi, serving as Vice President and an Interfraternity Council delegate.

**Tyler Fenimore** is a senior from Johnstown, PA, majoring in Health and Physical Education, with a minor in Community Health. Tyler wanted to become an SSS Peer Mentor to help other students who are confused or worried about college better understand and appreciate why they are here. He plays hockey and basketball, and *Shawshank Redemption* is his favorite movie.



**Lydia Dively** is a senior from Claysburg, PA, who is majoring in Special Education and minoring in Early Childhood Education. She says, "As a Peer Mentor, I am here to offer my assistance any way that I can." Lydia has been involved in many campus activities, such as Choir, Cantori, Student Cooperative Council, and the Dance Consort. Also, she serves as Campus Village President, the Secretary of Safe Haven—for which she is a certified Peer Educator, and a volunteer in the Wellness Center. Lydia enjoys spending time with her 19-month-old son, Taylor Lawrence Dively.



**Alyssa Hoover** is from Glenholden, outside Philadelphia. A senior majoring in Political Science-Pre-law, Alyssa hopes to attend law school for International or Sports & Entertainment Law. As a Peer Mentor, she helps others become comfortable and independent away from home. On the Student Cooperative Council, she serves on the Executive Board and is the Assistant Coordinator for the Haven Activities Council. Alyssa loves meeting new people and has traveled to Paris and London. Her favorite hobby is photography.



**Terrance Green** is a sophomore from Glenside, PA, majoring in Health & Physical Education with a minor in Sport & Exercise Physiology. He plans to teach and coach, pursue a master's degree and the culinary arts. He finds being a Peer Mentor rewarding because, "it gives me the opportunity to give back what I learned from my experiences here at LHU to the new students." Along with enjoying sports, Terrance is the Vice-President of the LHU Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance, Co-equipment Manager for the Residence Hall Association, Treasurer of Kappa Kappa Psi National Honorary Band Fraternity, and a member of the LHU drumline and marching band.

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