Peer-Led Hours by Arrangement in Organic Chemistry
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Introduction

The abstract nature of Organic Chemistry makes this subject challenging for students. The panic is evident on the first day of class, specially from Pre-Professional students. Predisposition coupled with poor study habits is not a good combination for success. I decided to explore the potential of peer-led study groups utilizing the Hours By Arrangement (HBA) class requirement. The goal was to create plenty of opportunities for student support at a convenient time that would result in increased confidence and better performance.

Methods

Honors students were assigned one HBA per week. I conducted one HBA per week. HBA were held at the Learning Center. Eight HBA slots were scheduled according to students’ schedules. Students earned 4% of their grade by attending one HBA hour per week.

Students say:
- “Very helpful, allowed me to ask questions freely without intimidation.”
- “We learned a lot in a comfortable environment.”
- “HBA were available almost every day. I felt they reinforced what we learned in class.”
- “They help for a cohesive learning environment with other students.”

HBA facilitators say:
- “It encouraged me to get a deeper understanding of the material.”
- “If you want to learn something, teach it!” “I would NOT have done as well without them. Essential. I was able to explain the concepts in a different way to my fellow students, which really helped both me and them.”

Results

- Students knew each other by first name.
- Students established their own learning community.
- Students spent countless hours studying at the Learning Center.
- Students were very comfortable asking questions in class.
- Help was available everyday.
- The average GPA rose to 3.46 in Fall of 2009 compared to 2.92 in Fall of 2008.

Conclusions

- I learned Organic Chemistry and made a ton of friends to study with.