

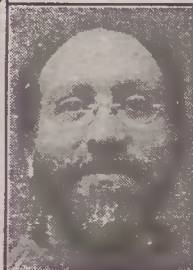
Money adds up for tutoring program

AT&T donates to community math program

By Lorin Mallorie
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The Asheville Initiative for Math, the department's community outreach program, received funding for an innovative math tutoring certification program aimed at creating new standards for math tutors across the local landscape.

"We see mathematics as a tool," said Sam Kaplan, UNC Asheville associate mathematics professor and director of AIM. "Whatever you're doing, with mathematics, you can do it even better."



Sam Kaplan

According to Kaplan, the university math department undertook an active role in the community. In 2006, the department included all their community outreach programs under AIM's umbrella.

The advisory group enrolls not only university professors, but the county school system, A-B Technical Institute and Mission Hospitals, as well.

Now, with the new \$25,000 grant from the AT&T Foundation, AIM launched the Math Tutor Certification Program, ensuring the highest level of local math tutor competency. Comprised of three phases, the new grant covers funding for the first stage.

In the initial phase, researchers create a standardized math-tutoring manual and certification program for the first time, Kaplan said. The manual teaches tutors how to mentor and build problem-solving skills while reflecting local school board policies.

"This needs to be in place to build the army of tutors needed in the community to generate a shift of thinking about math and math education," said the 10-year faculty member and Western North Carolina native.

When AT&T wanted to give to the community, the mayor's office directed the gift



Lorin Mallorie - Staff Writer

Math professors help students in the math lab in Rhoades Hall.

to AIM and the tutoring project proposal, Kaplan said.

Research shows that math education is related to high school dropout rates; students become frustrated with math and quit school altogether, Kaplan said.

With N.C. schools adopting a 4-year math requirement, dropout rates may increase because students are not prepared for this curriculum, a major concern for city government.

According to a recent American Institute of Research study, students who pass Algebra II are more than twice as likely to graduate from college as their less prepared peers.

"It is human nature for people to need help in this subject," said Peter Kendrick, 60, UNCA's math lab director since its creation in 1985.

According to Kendrick, the lab generates more than 6,000 hours of student use per semester, and the tutors should strive to make the teaching experience a positive one.

"If you're at all punishing about it,

if you make the person feel like there is something wrong with them, it's not going to work," he said. "But once you've got it, there's something kind of pleasant about offering help in math."

Scarlett College, 19, a sophomore mathematics major and N.C. Teaching Fellows Scholarship recipient, is currently a tutor at Asheville Middle School.

Using phrases like "we'll figure this out together" and "can you tell me how you got to this answer" is important in math tutoring, she said.

Kendrick encourages all university students to take advantage of the free, on-campus math lab which, he added, provides a study oasis with solution manuals, textbooks, coffee and a nice view.

"We serve a lot of students across campus who have any issue with math," Kaplan said. "Then, if a student gets stuck, they can raise their hands and the tutors help them do it right."

Off-campus, there is a remarkable com-

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