Introduction

MiraCosta began participating in the Western eTutoring Consortium in the 2012-2013 academic year. Rollout in the fall was low-key, through a new website, word of mouth and some publicity from TASC and Online Education. With successful usage in the fall, publicity was added for spring including more posters in the library, table tents in the cafeteria, and eTutoring announcements and links in Blackboard and Moodle.

eTutoring offers three services: eQuestions, which are asynchronous (email-based) question-and-answer interactions; eChat, which is a live (synchronous) rich chat/visual service for tutoring; and eWriting, which is a service for receiving asynchronous feedback on a paper. eWriting promotion has been minimal, as the MiraCosta Writing Center has been working toward offering an online writing feedback service of its own.

Across the three services, eTutoring's standard agreement allows for 200 uses per semester. In return, MiraCosta contributes a $3000 annual fee and 5 hours per week of tutoring time for 50 weeks per year. In the fall, MiraCosta students had 92 uses of eTutoring; this rose to 287 uses in the spring (requiring MiraCosta tutors to begin working an additional 5 hours per week once MiraCosta surpassed 200 uses).

The remainder of this document includes many more details on MiraCosta's participation in eTutoring; student feedback about eTutoring; and a comparison of MiraCosta's first year of participation with data from other Western eTutoring Consortium schools.

Data on MiraCosta 2012-2013 eTutoring Participation

In the fall, 36 unique students used eTutoring services a total of 92 times. The top four users accessed eTutoring services 31 times between them, accounting for nearly a third of all sessions; all other students accessed it 1, 2, or 3 times. 17 (nearly half) of the students used it more than once. The 92 total accesses breaks down to 25 eQuestions (27%), 57 eChat sessions (62%), and 10 eWriting paper consultations (11%).

In the spring, 80 unique students (more than double from fall) used eTutoring services a total of 287 times (more than triple from fall). 16 students (1/5) used it more than three times; 38 (again, nearly half, as in the fall) used it more than once. The 287 total accesses breaks down to 67 eQuestions (23%), 160 eChat sessions (56%), and 60 eWriting paper consultations (21%).

For more detail on the data from each category of eTutoring service, read on.

eQuestions

eQuestion data is broken down by the subject area of the question. For fall, the 25 eQuestions were from the following areas:

Anatomy & Physiology	7
Chemistry	6
Math	6
Biology	2
Writing	2
Economics	1
Accounting	1

The spring breakdown for the 67 eQuestions:

Chemistry	14
Math	12
Accounting	11
Spanish	6
Physics	5
Anatomy & Physiology	4
Calculus	4
Biology	3
Writing	3
Statistics	2
Microsoft Office	1

Clearly, the data set is small and trends are difficult to call out at this point, but it is noticeable that Chemistry and Math were consistent in their high level of interest in comparison to other subjects in both semesters.

15 unique students contributed the 25 eQuestions in the fall, with one student submitting more than three eQuestions (5). 36 unique students contributed the 67 eQuestions in the spring, with three students submitting more than three eQuestions (12, 6, 4).

eChat

eChat data, unfortunately, does not include which subject was under discussion.

eChat appears to generate more repeat use than eQuestions. In the fall, 20 unique students participated in eChat's 57 sessions. Three students participated in more than three eChats (13, 9, 6). 46 unique students participated in 160 eChat sessions in spring, with 8 students participating in more than three eChats (36, 24, 15, 9, 6, 4, 4, 4).

The time spent in eChat sessions ranged from 10 minutes to 1 hour, 47 minutes in the fall, with an average of 37:08 and a median of 33 minutes per session. In spring, the time spent in eChat sessions ranged from 10 minutes to 2 hours, 37 minutes, with an average of 33:23 and a median of 28 minutes per session. Note - eChat sessions lasting under 10 minutes are not recorded in the eTutoring data and do not count against MiraCosta's total eTutoring accesses.

The total amount of time recorded for MiraCosta student eChat sessions for all of 2012-2013 is over 124 hours.

eWriting

As mentioned earlier, the eTutoring eWriting service has not been promoted here because the Writing Center has been working on an online feedback service of its own. However, MiraCosta students remain free to use eWriting.

In the fall, 4 students used eWriting 10 times - one of the students using it 7 times, and that student was an English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) student. In the spring, 11 students made 60 eWriting submissions, with one ESL student accounting for 34 of those. 7 of the 11 students using eWriting in the spring were reported as ESL.

Student Feedback about eTutoring

The eTutoring service automatically sends a follow-up survey to students after each use of eTutoring. The brief survey asks students to rate the helpfulness of their experience on a 1-4 scale, and provides an opportunity for a narrative comment.

In the fall, of the 92 eTutoring accesses, students provided 9 responses to the survey (9.8% response rate), with an average helpfulness rating of 3.1. In spring, of the 287 eTutoring accesses, students provided 34 responses to the survey (11.8% response rate), with an average helpfulness rating of 3.5.

Representative student open-ended responses:

- “Speaking with the tutor makes things much easier than simply typing” (fall)
- “I am loving this eTutoring. It is very convenient for me. Thank you so much” (fall)
- “It was good. The tutor helped me out. The whiteboard was great because I am a visual learner and the tutor showed me what I was doing right and what I did wrong. Keep up the good work guys.” (fall)
- “Having the opportunity to get help for my question online was both convenient and helpful. Thank you so much!” (spring)
- “The online tutoring I received was more than satisfactory; the guidance was superb. Both tutors gave me GREAT direction, and I am very grateful. I thank you both!!” (spring)

- “It states that a reply will be given within 48 hours or less. and it actually took about 72 hours to get a reply back on the equestion. The answer was ok. I needed a little more clarification but I didn't ask because it would have taken another 3 days to get a response.” (fall)
- “The wait was very long because the people before me had lots of questions. I didn't mind doing other homework while I waited, but in the future it would be nice to have either more tutors available, or time limits for students once the "chat room" is full.” (fall)
- “One tutoring session went poorly, the other went very well. Can't remember the former's name, but the latter was named Gage - he had the chat room very well organized, was

> very quick about responding to people, and knew the material very well. I think the rooms can be too crowded with different pages... multiple drawing pages, upload pages, chat pages, lists of people in the room... it's a bit complicated." (spring)

At the end of the spring semester, Jim Julius solicited more in-depth feedback from some of MiraCosta's most frequent users of eTutoring. (Note - where names are used, the students gave permission.)

"Since I've been using the service, I've seen better grades on tests and an overall better understanding in school work. The service is great because it offers a great alternative to the already awesome tutors at MCC. Many times, however, I find myself needing help when I do most of my studying, the weekend! I'm certain that having this resource when I usually do my homework is why I can stay on top of my heavy class load." - Juan Jimenez

"I'm always at the Math Learning Center and have used MCC tutors for every subject I've taken. I still use tutors and the MLC quite often. Online tutoring is great because I can use it when the library is closed or I'm not able to get to school. I would say that eTutoring is an added service I use, definitely not replacing my usage of on-campus aid. … I would've loved it if my teachers would've mentioned it to me, maybe at the start of the semester?" - Juan Jimenez

"[eTutoring] was really helpful because not only it saved my time, but also it help me to improve my writing assignment. … I didn't have time to go to the writing center ... I remembered that I can use the eTutoring online and I did it. So I got the feedback the same day and was able to submit my assignment before the due date." - Huguette Tchuemegni

"I really began to use eTutoring over the weekend when I could not access a tutor to work in person. I have a busy work and school schedule, so finding time to meet with another person to go over homework is difficult. The time I usually work on homework is at night when most people are relaxing (no one willingly wants to work on homework late at night). I would post my question to the eTutoring page and I would receive a quick response. Having a schedule posted of when the tutors would be available was helpful because I would know exactly when to expect a response. It was ESPECIALLY convenient having tutors respond to questions over the weekend." - anon.

"As often as I could, I would attend tutoring sessions on campus at MIraCosta (SEC and OC). The tutoring sessions were not available on the weekend, so that is a main factor as to why eTutoring was so helpful for me. After I attended an on campus tutoring session during the week, I would sometimes have additional questions that I needed answered so I could complete the homework. I was not able to talk to the tutor I had previously seen to discover where my error was. Instead, I was able to show my work and send it to eTutoring. The online tutor was able to point out my error and explain why I was making that mistake and how I should fix it. The eTutoring services were very helpful when completing my Accounting homework." - anon.

“I am a member of the Honors Scholar Program, and I was talking to students about getting extra help in my Accounting classes. One of the tutors who is also a member of HSP recommended that I check out the online services. I had another friend who said she came across it online when trying to make an appointment and it was very helpful. I decided to give it a try and it proved to be very helpful to me.” - anon.

How MiraCosta Compares to Other eTutoring Consortium Institutions

Consortium-wide, the eWriting service is the most popular of the three, but given the low promotion of that service here, it is least used of the services at MCC. eWriting accounts for about 57% of eTutoring usage consortium-wide, whereas for MiraCosta it was 11% of usage in fall, and 21% of usage in spring. eQuestions account for about 12% of consortium-wide use; for MiraCosta eQuestions was 27% of fall usage and 23% of spring use. eChat accounts for about 32% of the consortium-wide eTutoring use; while at MCC it was 62% of fall use and 56% of spring usage.

The consortium-wide average student survey response over time is 3.4; that matches the average of MCC student responses in the spring, which was an improvement over the initial 3.1 average in the fall.

MiraCosta’s use this spring already places it among the top 25% of the Western eTutoring Consortium’s 40+ members in terms of number of accesses, and the speed at which MiraCosta has risen to that level of use is very unusual among the historical data across the consortium. The data does not provide a clear trend to guide expectations for future use here; at some institutions growth has been steady across many semesters, while at others, a plateau exists; at still others the use over time is very inconsistent and unpredictable. If that informs us of anything, it is to not take the apparent success of this year for granted; it will be important to continue to raise awareness of this service among faculty and students.