

Biomath Learning Center Launches Modified Supplemental Instruction Program



mSI Leaders, Robert Maloney & Kevon Pekchi

The IMSD-MERGE Biomath Learning Center: Modified Supplemental Instruction (mSI) program launched on February 12. Throughout the spring semester, 40 MAT125 (Calculus A) students had the unique opportunity to participate in peer-led review sessions for calculus prerequisite courses. The students were divided into two groups that met on Thursdays or Fridays throughout the semester, respectively.

The Thursday mSI program was led by Robert Maloney (junior, mathematics major) and Kevon Pekchi (senior, biology major). With the goal in mind to help participants apply the material, Maloney and Pekchi tried various strategies to determine the best way to engage them in collaborative work. "We start each session with a game that uses review material," said Pekchi. "The idea is to boost their confidence and then incorporate what they know

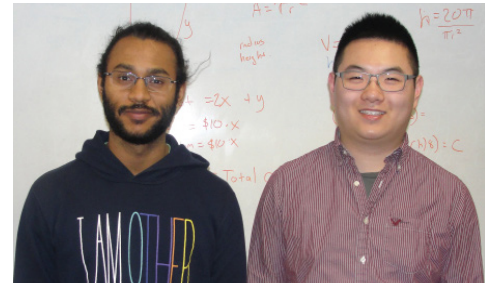
into more difficult work." Maloney added, "This strategy has been most effective because participants become comfortable working as partners or in groups. We also have them come up to the board to present to their peers." Towards the end of the semester, Maloney and Pekchi were pleased to see the participants improve as they worked together. "Of course we are always available to guide them when needed," said Maloney.

mSI Leaders, Wilka Carvalho (senior, physics major) and Michael Lam (sophomore, biology major) took a different approach to their Friday mSI program. After trying different strategies throughout the semester, they determined that calling students to the board to work out problems with the rest of the class was the most effective. "At the start of the semester the students were definitely extremely hesitant and unsure of themselves on how to even approach something as seemingly unapproachable as calculus," said Lam. "By the end of the semester though, we noticed the students have come out of their shells academically and are definitely more willing and confident in their skills. They may not get the problems 100% right, but it's the fact that they even attempted the problem and were able to grasp the concepts

and apply them as well as they do now." Carvalho added, "Teaching the material seems to be a good way to both engage students and have them develop their skills."

The mSI program has been an excellent resource for students. Students in the Thursday mSI program have mentioned that they would like to meet twice a week - once to review the material and once to work on application. According to Lam and Carvalho, students in the Friday mSI program have improved in their ability to perform mathematical computations and to generalize mathematical frameworks. "There are strong candidates that we can see as future mSI Leaders," said Pekchi.

The CIE and IMSD-MERGE would like to thank the the four Student Supplemental Instructor Leaders who dedicated time to assist with the MSI program: Wilka Carvalho, Michael Lam, Robert Maloney and Kevon Pekchi.



mSI Leaders, Wilka Carvalho & Michael Lam

Keeping It Real Series Addresses Topics that May Impact Academic Pursuits

There is more to life during graduate school than research and teaching assistant positions. "Non-academic issues can impact academic pursuits and we want to provide an opportunity for scholars to regularly talk about these issues in an informal setting," said Dr. Angel I. Gonzalez, Postdoctoral Associate, LSAMP-BD & IMSD-MERGE. Scholars gathered for two discussions in the Keeping it Real series - "Achieving Enlightenment: Fostering a Spiritual and Academic Life" in February and "Living on a Graduate Student Budget" in April. "We hope that the social support and insight into different ways to deal with these issues will build community and encourage scholars that they are not alone," said Dr. Gonzalez.

