The Ancell Learning commons (ALC) opened at Western Connecticut State University on October 31, 2013. Housed on the 4\textsuperscript{th} floor of the Westside Classroom building within the Robert S. Young Library, the ALC offers services to undergraduates and graduates taking business and JLA courses and to those seeking writing assistance.

Our Mission
The Ancell Learning Commons promotes student success by delivering excellence in academic support services for students and faculty.

Our Vision
The Ancell Learning Commons is a welcoming, dynamic hub where students can locate academic assistance, engage in learning behaviors, be inspired, and find connection, collaboration and comfort.
2016-2017 Highlights: Ancell Learning Commons

⇒ NCLCA Conference in Tampa, Florida: continuous improvement
⇒ Ancell Learning Commons Advisory Board
⇒ Focus on student learning beyond content
⇒ Tutor training at the next level
⇒ Assessment efforts amped up
⇒ Marketing: New strategies
⇒ Fear of the Fishbowl
⇒ 5th Annual Ancell Day makes us see red
⇒ Visions of videos on YouTube
⇒ Ancell Mentor Program completes a 5th year
⇒ We still care about financial literacy
Overview

The Ancell Learning Commons continues to work to increase student awareness of who we are, where we are, and what we offer. Ancell Day continues to be our single biggest event, but we are weaving ourselves more deeply into the fabric of Ancell in order to better serve our students and faculty. Our advisory board members are embracing their roles as champions and contributors. Our marketing efforts have become more embedded in the classrooms of Ancell. We have also seen center usage spread out more evenly over the course of a day so that busy afternoons are more balanced with morning usage.

Overall, we had **375 unique students** log **2,735 visits** to the Learning Commons (up by 45 unique students from last year). The key term here is log. Students continue to bypass our login area and this causes issues with our counts. We also frequently find students logged in to study who receive tutoring, which then goes unrecorded. Efforts to secure student cooperation continue.
NCLCA Conference

The National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA) conference held in October of 2016, once again, provided tremendous opportunity for professional development, unprecedented access to materials, and extensive networking contacts in the field of student success. This past year, NCLCA provided the impetus and information for more comprehensive tutor training, a sustainable plan for assessment, adoption of the core values of the University, further development of the ALC Advisory Board, and acceptance of a strategic plan for the Learning Commons, as well as other innovations and improvements. We have also mapped our goals to our mission based on take-aways from this conference.

![Image](image_url)

ALC Advisory Board (ALCAB)

Our ALC Advisory Board has been whittled down to one representative from each Ancell department, an Ancell adjunct professor and a representative from Academic Advising. Our strategic plan has been approved and is in place with an action plan, and the Board recently approved a plan to work with students on probation to pilot in fall 2017, based on staffing in the ALC. The Board has agreed to continue to meet one to two times per semester and has been charged with several functions:

1. To work with Ancell Learning Commons staff to assist with long term strategic planning in order to maximize impact of the Learning Commons.
2. To serve as advocates and liaisons for the ALC to the broader student, faculty, staff and administrative population.
3. To provide a venue for departments to address how the ALC can meet student needs based on student pass and retention rates.
In the Commons . . .

The ALC works to help students become active, successful learners by focusing on meta-cognition (thinking about thinking) and different types of thinking skills (Bloom’s Taxonomy). This year, we partnered with the Academic Resource Mentors to offer four hours of face to face training, including a special presentation from AccessAbility thanks to Maribeth Griffin (ARM) and the Cheryl Panosian-Haddad of the AccessAbility Department. Beyond our face to face training, we also require tutors to complete an 8 lesson course and offer an optional video about learning disabilities in Blackboard Learn. We have also compiled a tutor handbook for quick reference.

Tutor Training includes such topics as learning theory, learning styles, tutor responsibilities, study skills techniques, role modeling, goal setting, and handling difficult students. As part of ensuring excellence in the ALC and the effectiveness of our tutor training, we will schedule and perform formal and informal evaluations of tutor appointments using an approved rubric. Assessment results will be shared with the tutors for the purpose of improving their skills.
Marketing: New Strategies

This year we tried some new strategies to market our facility. For the first time, we invited faculty to bring in their classes, sit down in the Learning Commons, and hear about what we offer. The purpose of this exercise is to help students bypass their natural discomfort with entering a new place and asking for help. Our main group of visitors was the MKT 101 Orientation course for which we brought in 7 sections in fall and 3 sections in spring.

Tutors and staff visited all lower level accounting and finance classes during both fall and spring semesters. We have also joined the Saturday tour list for Enrollment Services, which we feel will help us let freshmen know that we are here!

Fear of the Fishbowl

When news of the “Fishbowl” refurbishment came out, we were concerned that we would lose our students to this beautiful, new space. In fact, overall visits were down, but in the past students have come in and walked right out when they see that the ALC is very crowded. A review of stats from our system show that we were up from 144 unique students in for tutoring to 161, and that we were up by 84 tutoring visits and 93 tutoring hours as of early May. We will continue to track student use, but currently we believe the beauty of the Fishbowl will allow us to focus on our mission of student support.
5th Annual Ancell Day Makes Us See Red

This year, Ancell Day was one of the hottest days of the semester, maybe THE hottest, and of course still very windy! Thankfully everyone survived and we came prepared with plenty of sunscreen, umbrellas and even some tents. We broke tradition by choosing a cardinal-red Ancell Leads T-shirt for 2016, and the design proved just as popular as always.

This year we had even more groups participate than in prior years, with a total of 21. Ancell itself hosted a series of tables to showcase the MBA program, financial literacy, the Ancell Learning Commons and the Alumni Mentor Program. All Ancell clubs participated, and this year we welcomed the Adventure Club for the first time. Career Services, ISEP Travel Abroad, Women’s Center, Academic Resource Mentors, Alumni Relations, The Robert S. Young Librarians, and many more took part. Also for the first time, we welcomed Student Financial Services, Women’s Business Development Center, and Academic Advising. We are so proud to watch this event grow! We continue to hold our free raffle, offering students an opportunity to earn more raffle tickets by visiting our participating tables.

We must again thank the Westside Campus food services, and Dr. Paul Simon, for closing the interior cafeteria and moving all food service outdoors on the day of our event, thereby ensuring success!
Visions of Videos on YouTube

With the help of Kathy Liscinsky, our former University Assistant, we were able to build a series of videos and slide shows on YouTube via the Ancell School of Business channel. Here you will find information about the Ancell Learning Commons, including how to make an appointment, info about our tutors, plus some information about studying and learning tied in with metacognition. We were also able to provide closed captioning, as we continue to work to meet accessibility needs and requirements.

Ancell Mentor Program

The Ancell Mentor Program served up some surprises for us this year when the number of students registering was double that of the prior year. We scrambled to meet the needs of students and are proud to say that most of the students who worked with us were very satisfied with the results. In all, 34 students registered and after five withdrew, we were able to place all but five of the remaining 29 students. This was likely the result of reducing the requirements to take part in the program. Findings for the year show that some changes are again needed.

For the 2017-18 academic year, we will be launching a group mentor approach with speakers to share their knowledge for underclassmen and those who have not achieved a 3.0 GPA. For students with 45 or more credits and a 3.0 GPA, we will continue to provide one-on-one mentoring as this has shown to be very effective for our student’s personal and professional development, with the understanding that students get from the program what they put into it.

Financial Literacy: We Still Care

Although we do not currently have funding for this program, we continue to provide a web page, social media on Twitter and Facebook, and a wall of information from the Federal Trade Commission available in the Ancell Learning Commons. We were also able to bring Financial Educator, Peter Bielagus, to the University in the fall. We will be moving forward with Career Services in an as yet undefined partnership to continue to provide student information and resources on this very important topic.