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Sharon Steele-Blakeman  
Director  
Collin ACCESS Program

## **An LSI Case Study**

### **Collin College**

### ***Sustainable, Student Success-Oriented Online Tutoring***

**Client:** Collin College

**Challenge:** *Creating connections in the community college through professionally-staffed online tutoring and distance-learning software on a community college-sized budget*

Collin College draws learners from Collin, Rockwall and part of Denton Counties, north and northeast of Dallas, Texas. In an earlier experiment, the forward-thinking educators of Collin invested in online tutoring, knowing of the research that has shown direct improvements in student success and retention with an effective tutoring program. Collin College comprises three campuses and three community centers, together with the Collin Higher Education Center, which is a partnership with five other institutions of higher education, including Texas A&M University-Commerce, University of Texas-Dallas, Texas Women's University, and the University of North Texas. Collin found that its original online tutoring vendor did not have sufficient flexibility to accommodate the changing needs of a community college. Particularly alarming were administrative charges and fees and a policy of expiring tutoring hours, items that increased the financial burden of college without offering any benefit to students. At the same time, Collin knew that students who did benefit from supplemental assistance valued the 24/7 accessibility of online tutoring. With this in mind, the Accommodations at Collin College for Equal Support Services (ACCESS) program sought a more flexible, yet fully professional, round-the-clock online tutoring partner, a company and a service that could meet students' needs and offer a more transparent pricing approach.

**Solution:** Collin's ACCESS team found the most promising solution to be the Link-Systems International, Inc. NetTutor® Online Tutoring Service. Well known for its dedication to the learning efforts of students since its founding in 1996, NetTutor features a fully equipped interface, the ability to preserve students' work for review, and the ability to provide comprehensive reporting. In addition, all NetTutor tutors are thoroughly trained and work at the LSI headquarters in Tampa, Florida, which enables quality control and operational efficiency. LSI developmental resources allot the time needed to integrate properly with a school's IT department.

Collin College found NetTutor to be a fully research-supported solution featuring:

- 24/7/365 tutoring coverage in core subjects.
- Tutors living in the US with degrees from or who are teaching at US institutions.
- Charges for tutoring that are strictly per minute of tutor-student communication, without added "processing" or software implementation fees.
- Service that is completely customizable: the interface, the LSI WorldWideWhiteboard®, has subject-specific tools chosen by Collin, a large whiteboard, and a chat line.

In addition, independent studies show that the use of NetTutor is associated with significant increases in student persistence, retention, and achievement. With the training they receive, they have been proven effective in communicating learning methods and objectives online.

Going along with LSI's adoption of an integration of cognitive and contextualized learning theory and techniques, the company boasts a trained team of customer service specialists ready to answer students' technical inquiries at any time of the day.

With all of this in mind, Collin chose to make online tutoring available free of charge in math, science, writing, and other subjects so that students can log into NetTutor for online help. LSI worked with the Collin IT team to arrange a special NetTutor login for Collin students and meet the requirements of the campus portal. Meanwhile, NetTutor managers worked with Collin's ACCESS team to arrange times of subject coverage, to establish guidelines for how tutors respond to student questions, and to share learning materials with the campus.

**Result:** The changeover to NetTutor went smoothly and has already generated great interest among students. Solid pedagogy, collaborative learning, and the development of the community college ecosystem go hand-in-hand with NetTutor. The Collin ACCESS program is better able to reach out to students, to meet the challenges of both its developmental and accelerated learners and still keep the program budget in line. Collin can now provide online tutoring at no charge to their students, keep track of how much tutoring is being used, and never have to worry about non-tutoring-related charges.

**Testimonial:** "One of Collin's core values is to promote academic excellence. Collin College has finally found an online tutoring partner, NetTutor, who we believe has the same commitment to academic excellence. NetTutor's student friendly and knowledge-based approach has proven to meet the needs of our specific and diverse student population. NetTutor took the time to listen to what we needed and customized their online tutoring services to meet our institution's specific needs. NetTutor was more cost-effective than the other online tutoring companies that we researched. More importantly, it has proven to offer the highest quality in tutoring services and exceptional customer service. Our goal is to promote student success and retention. We believe that collaborating with NetTutor will help us get there!" — **Sharon Steele-Blakeman, Director, Collin ACCESS Program**

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