Academic BRASS

the 1990s and 2000s,
in conjunction with the rise of information or learning commons
models (Bodermer, 2014, p.165). The use of student workers to
services across college and university libraries continues to inc
p.234-5), and there are several existing examples of efficacious
utilizing undergraduate student workers (Bodermer, 2014; Faix
Nevertheless, there seems to be significant untapped potential
support to business students across a variety of institutions. Wh
of one such sustainable reference service, utilizing one student

As a new professional and liaison to the 3,500-student

Moreover, the instructional faculty routinely make use of undergraduate teaching assistants to support learning in these content-heavy courses.

The library's peer reference student worker position fits into the same category as this teaching assistant— what Falchikov (2001) names "cross-level peer tutoring involving one institution" in her typology of peer tutoring (p.9, 36-46). That is to say, both set-ups make use of existing differences in student preparedness or expertise. Successful completion of the courses in question (or their equivalent) is a requirement listed in the peer research coach's job description and a condition of employment. Previous experience teaching, tutoring, coaching others was also given preference in the hiring process.

Once the student had been interviewed and selected, the student read and signed a ten-point position description as well as a negotiated statement of learning outcomes for the year in order to clarify the expectations and communicate the value placed on the student worker's growth throughout the employment period. This COB 300 peer research coach was prepared for and expected to answer course-related business reference questions of moderate complexity— those in the 3-4 range of the 6-point READ scale (see Gerlich, n.d.). Formal training included selected readings from Celia Ross's *Making Sense of Business Reference* and several similar guides, a reading on working with teams of students, review of the library guide for the course and other commonly used resources, practice questions, and (ideally) observation of in-class library instruction for the courses in question. Ongoing guidance was provided during a weekly, in-person meeting and as needed.

Based on anecdotal evidence, having increased options for course-specific research help benefited the target students in three notable ways. First, the peer research coach extends the hours during which specialized business research assistance is available to include Sundays and weekday nights, both in-person and through the university library's chat system. This provided a cost-effective means of lightening the business librarian's workload by triaging reference questions from this cohort of 600-plus per term. Second, the predictable benefits of peer tutoring for both tutors and tutees— including increased cognitive apprehension, academic skills development, and learner engagement and motivation— are well-documented (Bodermer, 2014, p. 162-165; Owen, 2011, p. 55-58; Falchikov, 2001, p. 67-83). Positive student feedback and some groups' repeat consultations with the peer research coach helped substantiate these presumed gains.

Third, the peer research coach's existence provided students a choice in course-specific research help. Having two options for research consultations allowed students some ability to choose an avenue that better suited their learning styles and personalities, as indicated by some students' gravitation toward the student assistant or myself in spite of hours of availability. Furthermore, in a university and a discipline that continue to struggle with sexism and other unsavory gender dynamics (Anderson, 2014; Chugh, Milkman, & Akinola, 2014; Sandler, 2008; Whitmire, 2008), I have to wonder whether the marked predominance of female students who sought me out for research help versus those that visited the male peer research coach(es) bore a significance.

There is clear room for improvement in service assessment (beyond simple tallying of service hours and reference interactions) and promotion to the target student population. In the future, I also hope to coordinate better with the recently piloted, general peer reference service within the university libraries, particularly in student worker training. From my current vantage point, however, the benefits of this course-specific, peer research coach far outweigh the cost of time and resources. I highly