FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pirate C.A.V.E. Enhances Learning for ECU College Algebra Students

GREENVILLE, N.C. (Aug. 2, 2012) — This fall, East Carolina University students taking college algebra will notice a change in curriculum modeled largely after a program based at Louisiana State University. The Pirate C.A.V.E. (College Algebra Virtual Environment) Math 1065 Lab is a new learning lab located in the basement of Joyner Library.

Beginning with the first day of class on Aug. 21, students enrolled in Math 1065 will attend one, 50-minute class session each week. Due to the high demand for college algebra, attendance is vital. Students who miss the first day of their scheduled Math 1065 class will be dropped from the course.

The students then are required to attend at least three hours in the Pirate C.A.V.E. Students will use the MyMathLab software program located in the lab to complete homework assignments and take all quizzes and exams. Supplemental videos provided by LSU also are available to students in the lab. The ECU math department is in the process of creating additional videos.

While in the Pirate C.A.V.E., students will receive assistance from instructors, as well as lab tutors. For every section of Math 1065 that a professor teaches at ECU, that professor will spend two hours in the lab. A total of 20 student lab tutors also have been hired and will be available during lab hours. To work in the lab, tutors receive training and must successfully complete, with a 100 percent score, three problem sets containing exercises the students in Math 1065 are assigned.

Lab Director and mathematics instructor Cathy Wilkerson said this model of teaching mathematics at other institutions has been very successful in decreasing D/F grades, and has positively increased passing rates and retention for students.

“I am very excited to be a part of our redesign of Math 1065. We have a great team of college algebra instructors, and we have been planning for its implementation for over a year,” said Wilkerson. “We are hopeful that we can achieve the same success that other universities have experienced with their redesigns.”

According to Dr. Johan Hattingh, chair of the Department of Mathematics, the primary goal of the redesign of Math 1065 is to shift students from a passive, note-taking role to an active orientation that will enhance learning.
“In essence, students learn math by doing math, not by listening to someone talk about doing math,” said Hattingh. “I am very excited about the redesign’s promise of improved grades and fewer withdrawals, as has been the case at several universities that have redesigned their college algebra course.”

ECU Chancellor Steve Ballard, Provost Marilyn Sheerer, Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences Dean Alan R. White and Hattingh enthusiastically endorse ECU’s Pirate C.A.V.E.

“We have lost several fixed-term instructors due to the economic crisis, and the new lab will help the department continue to meet its huge foundational teaching commitments. I want to thank Chancellor Ballard, Provost Sheerer and Dean White for their unwavering commitment to this project,” said Hattingh.

The Pirate C.A.V.E. celebrates its grand opening with a ribbon cutting ceremony at 2 p.m., Aug. 15. In attendance will be Ballard, Sheerer, White, Hattingh and other supporters and staff of the lab.

Starting on Aug. 21, the Pirate C.A.V.E. will be open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., and on Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For additional information about the Pirate C.A.V.E., contact Wilkerson at 252-328-1892 or send her an email at wilkersonc@ecu.edu.

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