

Job Description: Conversation Partner

Introduction:

Conversation practice / English language tutoring is one of the services that the Academic Support Center (ASC) provides to multilingual students in their first year at St. Olaf. Conversation partners offer these students an opportunity to practice speaking in a supportive space with feedback related to language, culture and discourse strategies. Our goal is to help students feel competent and confident joining the conversations (academic and social) that are taking place all around them at St. Olaf.

Students who request a conversation partner will have a wide range of needs related to listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and pronunciation. They may also have *strong* English language skills but still feel uncomfortable interacting with their new peers on campus. So, conversation partners must be flexible and ready to try different approaches to help students reach their goals. For example, partners can talk about classes and course content, college and campus culture, current events, etc. Partners can read or listen to a text together and then use the text for an academic purpose (summarizing, evaluating, defending). Partners can also talk *about* conversation, speaking, and strategies for in-class discussion and then practice by role playing. Conversation partners must participate fully in the interactions while listening carefully and giving instructional feedback when appropriate.

This position is ideal for students who are interested in language education and cross-cultural interaction. Conversation partners gain valuable tutoring/mentoring experience. Successful conversation partners meet or exceed the high expectations of the students, faculty, and professional staff with whom they interact by being responsible and thoughtful in their work. As employees of St. Olaf College, conversation partners represent the college and uphold its mission and standing.

Qualifications:

- Conversation partners must have strong interpersonal skills.
- Conversation partners must be open-minded and welcoming toward cultural and linguistic differences.
- Conversation partners must be self-aware, reflective, patient, comfortable working with peers.
- Conversation partners must be self-motivated, self-directed, and highly accountable.
- Conversation Partners may major in any discipline. (We strive to represent as many disciplines as possible.)
- Applicants may apply without having a need-based work award.

Hiring and training:

Hiring takes place during spring semester and throughout the year as needs arise. Initial training takes place during Week One and as needed throughout the year. Ongoing training occurs through participation in staff meetings and one-on-one with the Multilingual Student Language Support Specialist. Conversation Partners are encouraged to contribute to the growing ideas bank for this type of tutoring.

The time commitment required for this position varies greatly depending on demand. Typically, if/when there is a request for this type of tutoring, partners will schedule meetings during 1-2 hours per week. Tutors absolutely must be available via email for communication with supervisors and the ASC staff.