Dear Future Fellow Tutors,

While this quarter did pass by quickly I can say that I have learned a lot from my experiences tutoring. This has been my first encounter with the “real world” working environment. You must be punctual, polite, professional, kind, understanding, friendly, firm, clear, and the most important approachable. You must be all these things in order to succeed in life, especially in a working environment. As for punctual, that has never been an issue for me. The way I see it, you are rather late or on time, there is no such thing as early. I check my email everyday as well, so even if a tutee emailed me hours before the session was going to start I would be able to make adjustments without any excessive energy being spent.

Polite sounds easy, because is an everyday practice, we have to be polite to the people and animals around us in order to properly function within society. However, when dealing with a difficult tutee or a stressful situation (such being blamed for a poor grade) it is very difficult to remain both polite and professional.

Polite and professional, I have learned, are two actions that go hand in hand. You cannot be professional without being polite. For example, you cannot get angry when a tutee fails to show, you must keep your cool and simple send them an e-mail saying you noticed their failure to show and they are on notice. It was difficult learning how to keep things from getting under your skin.

Being kind, friendly, and understanding was easy to do. It is easy to be kind, friendly, and understanding when all of the people around you are that constructive. This taught me that the staff creates the mood in the workplace, so if the staff is positive then the work place is positive. If you are kind to your tutee and understand that life sometimes gets in the way, then the tutee will be more willing to cooperate with the tutor, and be much easier to work with.

I found very early on that it is important to be firm and clear with the people around you, especially the tutees. Since a majority of the tutees are learning English as a second language it is very important that the tutor avoids confusing the tutee. I found it vital to speak slowly and clearly and in a calm manner to help avoid any confusion. At the beginning I would get so excited that I would talk fast and slur my words like I do when speaking to friends; however when I noticed my tutees were not keeping up with my words, I slowed down and did my best to enunciate.
Another very important lesson I learned from working in the WRC is the power of e-mail. Communicating through e-mail is much more efficient than communicating via phone because so much can be misunderstood through a phone; but with e-mail you can edit your words even used “sent” e-mails as a nifty reminder.

The most important thing I learned was how to be approachable. I made sure to always greet my tutees whenever I saw them; inside the WRC, around campus, or even at the grocery store. I learned that you must let your tutees know that you are not an authority figure, you are there to help them as a fellow student.

My best advice for future tutors is to not be afraid to ask for help. If you have a question, concern, or just need to talk do NOT be afraid to approach fellow tutor, staff, or senior tutors. Even if you feel that your concern is silly or just plain superfluous you should still voice your concern and speak with something; chances are another tutor is going through the exact same problem as you are.

Another piece of advice I have to offer is do not feel like you should know everything there is to know about English reading and writing. Not even teachers know all the rules and tricks; you’re still learning, so think of the peer tutoring class as a great opportunity to learn more and improve your own English skills.

Do not take more tutees than you can handle. If you cannot give at least one-hundred percent to each tutee that you have then you have too many. Do not go out of your way to accommodate a tutee, if they continually cancel or change the date a tutoring session; speak with them because you do not need that extra stress in your life.

My last and most important piece of advice would be taking your work seriously, have fun, and always maintain a positive attitude. You cannot accomplish anything in life without remaining positive.