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The Peer Support Project at the Faculty of Science in Split

The Peer Support Project at the Faculty of Science was established during the spring semester of 2023/2024 to provide structured support to students with disabilities, chronic illnesses, or mental health issues. This group of students often faces numerous barriers to academic continuity, particularly due to frequent absences and a lack of institutional support. The project is based on the concept of peer assistance, wherein senior students voluntarily and without any form of compensation provide academic support to their peers. This includes help with understanding course material, exam preparation, and navigating academic procedures. The participating students approached their roles with a high level of empathy, understanding, and commitment, thereby enriching the project with strong emotional support as well. Beneficiaries have shown humongous progress in general. But the impact of the project extends beyond academic success – bonds of trust were formed, fostering a sense of belonging and social inclusion. Activities are conducted outside the framework of formal personal assistance, emphasizing academic solidarity and inclusiveness. The first implementation cycle demonstrated a positive impact on the academic performance and motivation of the beneficiaries, while also raising awareness of the importance of equal educational opportunities. In the following academic year, the number of participants increased significantly, further confirming the project's value and impact.

Keywords: peer support, inclusion in higher education, students with disabilities, academic accessibility