

# Student Learning Commons Annual Report 2009/2010

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## Introduction

- The Student Learning Commons (SLC) is a library-based academic learning centre with the mandate to assist and support students in their academic pursuits, with a focus on providing writing and learning support services across the three SFU campuses. The SLC delivers programs in partnership with the Library, Campus IT, Student Services, faculty, and many other campus individuals and groups.
- SLC programs are provided using a highly effective tiered-service model, comprised of carefully selected and prepared undergraduate SLC Peers, graduate student Graduate Writing/Learning Peer Facilitators, and professional Writing, Learning, and EAL/ESL Coordinators.

## Highlights 2009/10

- Uptake of SLC services continued to increase steadily over previous years of operation.
- Integrated programs such as the CMPT Academic Enhancement Program (AEP) and the large-scale Back On Track (formerly Student Success) Program continued to develop and expand.
- Increased services to graduate students was a primary focus for the year and included a targeted web page, a full suite of workshops on topics of interest to graduate students, and the launch of a new Read Ahead service for in-depth writing consultations.
- Due to the efforts of Learning Services Coordinator Ruth Silverman, the SLC Peer Educator Program achieved International Tutor Program Certification – Level II from the influential US-based College Reading & Learning Association. This means that SLC Peers can be awarded Level I or Level II certificates, depending on their number of face –to–face consultation hours over two semesters.
- Writing Services Coordinator Renee McCallum met with Patricia Staaf and Jonas Alwall, University of Malmo, a visit organized by SFU International and focusing on student writing/language issues and support services. Elaine Fairey and Head of Reference Janis McKenzie met with library school professors Mizoue, Toshimori, and Donkai from the University of Tsukuba in Japan to discuss developing a learning commons at their university.

## Consultations

- 2362 students sought individual consultations with SLC Peers, Facilitators, and Coordinators during FY 2009/10, an increase of 14% despite the mid-March Olympic break. Students primarily sought consultations for writing concerns, although writing consultations also touched on time management, reading loads and other “learning” issues.
- Feedback forms for completion after each consultation continued to be very popular, soliciting a majority of *\*very\** positive comments.

### Open registration workshops

- 1417 students attended 146 of these workshops, open to the entire SFU student body and most offered at all three campuses. This was an increase of 13% and 14% respectively.
- The August/September 2009 “Way to an A” transition workshops in Burnaby and Surrey continued to be very popular, attracting 165 motivated attendees.
- A number of instructors and programs continued to offer bonus marks for attendance at SLC workshops and SLC Coordinators also co-developed and/or co-facilitated open workshops with faculty members from Mathematics, program directors from the Centre for Distance and Online Education, and counsellors from Health and Counselling Services.
- Technical support workshops were offered at Burnaby (MS Office products) and Surrey (graphics software packages).
- Open workshops covered core topics such as academic writing, time management and study strategies, and included *Research Paper Writing*, a collaboration between Writing Services Coordinator Renee McCallum and Librarians Rebecca Dowson and Holly Hendrigan, and *Exam Preparation: Strategies for Success in Math/Q Courses*, presented by Mathematics Faculty members M. Dubiel and J. Mulholland.

### Orientations

- 8007 students, faculty, and others received 79 SLC orientations. These presentations provided information about the SLC programs and services and are an important outreach to a variety of courses and groups. The SLC prepared materials for new faculty and participated in New Student Orientations, Information Evenings for prospective students and their parents, Surrey Open House and other events. The Foundations of Academic Literacy (FAL X99) curriculum embedded an SLC visit and orientation into all of its sections.

### Graduate students

- The SLC sponsored 4 \*extremely\* popular sessions of *How's It Going? Good, Good!": Practical Tips for Writing Your Thesis* delivered by Dr. Alton Harestad (BISC) and attended by 185 graduate students.
- Other workshops included *Introduction to the Graduate Literature Review*, *Poster Perfect: Creating Posters for Presentation*, and *Improving Spoken English* workshops and individual consultations to FBA grad students at the Segal Centre.
- EAL Coordinator Tim Mossman hosted a weekly Grad Café conversation group which attracted a small but motivated group of EAL graduate students and post-doctoral fellows.
- The Read Ahead service launched in September with 32 appointments in the Fall term and 50 in the Spring term. Writing Services Coordinator Renee McCallum prepared Graduate Facilitator Tzy Horng Sai to join her in offering this increasingly popular service.
- Renee and various Librarians partnered to present well-received integrated writing/library research workshops for graduate courses and programs such as IAT 801 and M. Ed. cohorts.

### English as Additional Language (EAL) services

- SLC peers hosted two weekly English Conversation Groups with an average of 15 attendees each per week, while EAL Coordinator Tim Mossman provided training for SLC Peers on working with EAL students and presented a variety of open and tailored workshops and consultation services on grammar, accent reduction, paraphrasing and other skills.
- Tim and Grad Facilitator Paul Yeung presented *Working with Multilingual Students: Challenges and Opportunities* to two TA/TM Day audiences.
- Under Tim's direction, Paul Yeung researched EAL/ESL services at selected Australian, Canadian and American universities to discover best practices for peer-based services.

### Course and program integrated activities

- Students benefit from learning and applying writing and learning strategies in the context of their specific courses or programs. A number of faculty and other instructors requested presentations tailored to specific classes, and more than a few of these were repeat requests. Topics included *Preparing to Write Your Literature Review* (CMNS 262), *Doing the Language of Schooling* (FAL X99), and *Note-taking for Lectures* (MBB 308).
- **The Academic Enhancement Program (AEP)** integrates effective learning strategies within the CMPT curriculum, especially at the first year level, through course readings, special topic workshops, and a variety of in-class and outside-class activities. In 2009/10, the AEP became a required component of the CMPT undergraduate curriculum. Dr. Diana Cuikerman and Learning Services Coordinator Donna McGee Thompson and their research team began exploring how to scale and sustain the program by including TAs and SLC graduate facilitators as instructors. At SFU Surrey, Surrey SLC Coordinator Cynthia Wright worked with CMPT faculty and other instructors to present and facilitate AEP activities.
- **Back On Track (formerly Student Success) Program** expansion to include all SFU undergraduate students was approved by Senate for 2009/2010. The SLC participated in overall program development and planning, as well as development and implementation of specific core elements, including individualized learning plans, and weekly seminar curriculum and facilitation in partnership with representatives from Health Counseling Services. Lisa Lam from the BOT Office began working with Learning Services Coordinator Kathryn Ricketts in March to provide much needed clerical support for the Seminars. Cynthia continued to fine-tune the BOT WebCT application and worked with the central BOT office towards embedding learning strategies in the online BluePrints program. **Over the year, SLC staff presented 35 (18) Getting Started sessions; conducted 559 (380) hour long learning plan consultations, and facilitated 248 (156) weekly seminars. (2008/09 statistics in brackets).**