

**ANNUAL REPORT 2010/2011**

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The Student Learning Commons (SLC) is a library-based academic learning centre with a focus on providing writing and learning support services across the three SFU campuses. 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.

The SLC programs and services support the interconnected themes of teaching and learning, research, student experience and success, and community outreach.

**HIGHLIGHTS 2010/2011****TEACHING AND LEARNING SUPPORT; RESEARCH SUPPORT***Consultations*

- Across all campuses, 3006 undergraduate and graduate students booked or dropped in for individual consultations with SLC Peers, Facilitators, and Coordinators during FY 2010/11, a 22% increase. Students primarily sought consultations for writing concerns, although writing consultations also touched on time management, reading loads and other “learning” issues. Consultations at Vancouver increased a dramatic 142%, and were trending upward at Surrey by year end.
- a *Read Ahead* in-depth writing consultation service for graduate students was established and provided guidance to 45 students from 25 disciplines. Demand rose throughout the year and increased Graduate Peer Facilitator time was targeted for this service beginning in Spring 2011. Graduate student consultations over all increased 77%.

*[Consultant] was fantastic - I got a very clear idea of what direction I needed to move in to make my paper better. I feel energized and ready to proceed! ... undergraduate student*

*[I learned] how to get the most out of my readings [and] new and effective study techniques which I'm excited to try out! This was really helpful! I'm mad at myself for not coming earlier! Thank you so much!! ... undergraduate student*

*... I am thrilled to tell you that I have been accepted in the [masters] program. I know that my success is due to the team of people that have supported me throughout the process and you*

*were part of that team. I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for all your efforts . . .graduate student*

### ***Integrated classes***

- Integrated class presentations reached 3827 students in 113 sessions, increases of 20% and 47% respectively. Faculty-requested in-class sessions on writing topics, primarily delivered by SLC Writing Services Coordinator Renee McCallum, increased 83% over the year before, reaching 28% more students. These requests came from a wide variety of disciplines, including Archaeology, Business, Communication, Contemporary Arts, Criminology, Education, History, Interactive Arts & Technology, and others. While the majority were one-off sessions, integrated activities at the graduate level included on-going collaboration with faculty, and often librarians, for example, in a series of sessions for the Graduate Cohort in Contemporary Arts.
- The large scale Academic Enhancement Program continued to be embedded in the first year Computing Science curriculum with SLC Learning Services Coordinators Donna McGee Thompson and Cynthia Wright delivering 37 in-class learning strategies sessions to 1045 students in Burnaby and Surrey. Donna McGee Thompson continued her research partnership with Dr. Diana Cuikerman from CMPT, completing a Teaching and Learning Inquiry Project sponsored by the SFU Institute for the Study of Teaching and Learning in the Disciplines, and co-authored a paper accepted for presentation at the *ITICSE (Innovation and Technology in Computer Science Education) 2011* conference and for publication in the *ACM (Association for Computing Machinery) Digital Library*.
- The Foundations of Academic Literacy (FAL X99) course continued to embed an SLC visit and orientation into all of its sections, and SLC Learning Services Coordinator Kathryn Ricketts presented a variety of learning topics within FAL sections by instructor request.

*...we [Contemporary Arts faculty, SLC Coordinator Renee McCallum, Librarian Sylvia Roberts] built in some learning commons and library support/workshops into 811/812 last year. This was very effective. The students all had much better project proposals (for their 1st year projects- previous cohorts- up to 60% had to re-write- this year- none) and SSHRC Grants, and essays. ... Contemporary Arts faculty member*

*... I personally wanted to thank you so much for setting up a workshop that clearly and realistically addressed the issues that residents face. We appreciate that you took time outside of your regular schedule to partner with us. ... Residence community advisor*

*.... I felt that SFU's and AEP's initiative to assist students' transition to the university environment was deserving of praise. I believe that all students will be able to gain valuable insight by participating in such a workshop. .... CMPT student*

*... I have been receiving emails from instructors ALL singing your praises (as usual!!). Everyone LOVES your workshops and I think they are quickly becoming an integral part of the FAL experience. ... FAL Administrator*

## STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND SUCCESS

### **Open workshops**

- 1356 motivated students attended 117 open registration workshops, most offered at all three campuses. This was a decrease of 20% and 4% respectively, more than offset by the increase in integrated classes noted above.
- Open workshops covered core topics such as transition to university, academic writing, time management, and study strategies, and included sessions on *Structuring ideas through grammar*, *Creating an effective study schedule*, *Concise & coherent writing*, *Getting the most from your lectures and university textbooks*, and many more.
- The SLC also organized a comprehensive program of graduate workshops on topics such as literature reviews, alerting services, presentation skills, and dissertation planning. These were delivered by SLC coordinators, librarians, and faculty.
- Technical support workshops were offered at Burnaby (MS Office products) by IC Techs under the SLC umbrella.

*[It] was exactly what I needed to clarify some questions and raise new ones. I believe workshops like this one will prepare me for the beginning of my university life . ... **On your way to an a attendee***

*... Good info was presented and explained clearly. [I learned] how much time I do actually have that could be used for studying instead of for other things. ... **Creating an effective study schedule attendee***

*... The workshop activities are helpful and interesting. [I learned] to be able to present counter arguments on research. The session is spirit lifting and encouraging. It will help me write better research papers. ... **Critical thinking: basic approaches attendee***

### **English as an Additional language (EAL) services**

- Services for EAL students expanded significantly with the introduction of the *Conversation Partners* program in Fall 2010. By January 2011, 25 EAL Peers were providing one-to-one weekly conversation practice to 43 students, with over 50 students on the waiting list. Weekly conversation groups were also offered at Burnaby at both the undergraduate and graduate level.
- SLC EAL Services Coordinator Tim Mossman provided individualized English Learning Plan appointments to assess students' oral and written language skills and provide strategies and resources for improvement, and also offered tailored services for graduate students at the Segal Centre, in the Modelling of Complex Social Systems (MoCSSy) Research and Training Program, and in the International TA Program, among others.

*... I would like to continue developing my spoken English. I hope to able to speak confidently and fluently without thinking about word choice or grammar. I was paired for the first time this Spring 2011 semester and I think it helped me gain more confidence in my speaking. I also*

*enjoyed getting to know a little about my conversation buddy. I would be glad to continue in the program." ...Conversation Partner participant*

*... Thank you very much. The lesson was interesting, we improved our language (by concentrating on one topic - stereotypes-) and at the same time we discussed an important case. Thank you it was useful. Hope to see you next Tuesday. ...Grad Cafe participant*

*... thanks so much again for making the time to come and speak with us. Everyone was really grateful -- lots of happy, positive comments about how useful and helpful it all was. You have a nice way of giving everyone a boost of confidence regarding their language use. I really appreciate all the insights and information. It's terrific. ... International TA Program instructor*

### **Back on Track (BOT)**

- The SLC continued to participate in BOT program development and delivery. Over the year, SLC staff presented 39 Getting Started sessions, offered 1,064 hour long learning plan consultations, and co-facilitated 35 sections of the BOT 120 weekly seminars and 13 sections of the BOT 140 bi-weekly seminars with Health and Counseling Services counselors.
- There was a downward trend in BOT program uptake throughout the year as fewer students fell into academic difficulties and were Required To Withdraw (RTW). Declining BOT statistics represent good news for student success, although the program is prepared to adjust to the future fluctuations which are bound to occur.

*...Thank you so much for everything! Although I was sceptical at first, I had an amazing time in BOT and I learned a lot about myself as well as some great skills. ...I really appreciate your support throughout this whole experience. Thank you again. ... BOT 120 student*

### **SLC Peers**

- The SFU Peer Educator Program, with its emphasis on meaningful service, personal development, and community building, contributes strongly to the experience and success of its student volunteers. SLC Coordinators Ruth Silverman, Cynthia Wright, and Renee McCallum coordinated and mentored the SLC Writing & Learning Peer team, while SLC EAL Services Coordinator Tim Mossman launched and coordinated the new EAL Peer team. With approximately 25 members in each group, the SLC now fields the largest group of Peers in the Program, which is based in Student Services.

*...Volunteering as a peer educator for the Student Learning Commons has enriched my experience as a student at SFU in many ways. ... Just as I recommend the SLC to all students regardless of their academic abilities, I recommend the volunteering experience as a way for strong and ambitious students to take the next step and refine their skills further. I didn't realize how much more there was for me to learn until I became involved and the difference in my capabilities is very clearly measurable." ... SLC Writing & Learning Peer*

*... I'm very satisfied with my experience with the programs. It feels well structured, well organized and I've felt especially privileged to be a part of a pilot program this year with Tim Mossman. ...SLC EAL Peer*

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT**

### ***Orientations***

- 6676 students, faculty, and others received 71 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, and other events.

### ***High school, college and university outreach***

- High school outreach was particularly active with visits and presentations from and to teachers, teacher-librarians, and student groups. Schools included GW Graham (Chilliwack); Kitsilano, Gladstone, Point Grey and John Oliver (Vancouver); with discussions and presentations on study skills, academic writing, and library research, the latter in collaboration with SFU librarians.
- The SLC hosted visitors from the Justice Institute of BC, Langara College, Vancouver Community College, the University of Victoria and York University.
- Through the SFU Staff Mobility Initiative, Donna McGee Thompson visited learning centres and libraries at Malmö University (Malmö, Sweden), Maastricht University (Maastricht, Netherlands), University of Amsterdam, and the University of Leeds (Leeds, England)

### ***Selected other***

- SLC Coordinators Ruth Silverman and Kathryn Ricketts facilitated focus groups and hallway chats for the President Petter's EnVision SFU project, as did SLC Director Elaine Fairey

- SLC Director Elaine Fairey worked with BC post-secondary library and writing colleagues towards creating Write Away, a collaborative provincial online writing support service intended as a companion to the well-established Ask Away chat reference service.
- The SLC web site and its resources continued to receive kudos from external users in Canada and the United States

*... This morning I found your page,  
[http://learningcommons.sfu.ca/strategies/learning\\_and\\_studying/pandp.htm](http://learningcommons.sfu.ca/strategies/learning_and_studying/pandp.htm) . [the presentations and participation page]. I've been coaching my students about giving oral reports and next week am going to introduce visual aids into the equation. I wanted to thank you for putting the page together since I plan on sharing some of your links with my class." ...*  
teacher, Washington DC charter school