

**STUDENT LEARNING COMMONS
Annual Report 2007/08**

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Introduction

The Student Learning Commons (SLC) is an 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 is based in the W.A.C. Bennett Library on the SFU Burnaby campus, and coordinates services to the other campuses through the Yosef Wosk Student Learning Commons and Fraser Valley Real Estate Board Academic Library at SFU Surrey, and the Samuel and Frances Belzberg Library at SFU Vancouver.

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 Facilitators, and professional Writing, Learning, and EAL/ESL Coordinators.

In its second year of operation, the Student Learning Commons continued to meet the core goals of delivering programs and services in 3 major areas:

- 1) applicable to the needs of the broadest range of SFU students, primarily undergraduates;
- 2) tailored to the conventions and requirements of specific disciplines;
- 3) targetted to the specialized needs of specific student audiences, including English as additional language (EAL) learners, graduate students, First Nation students, students with disabilities, and mature/returning students.

Summary of activities

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1. Consultations, open workshops and orientations

a. Consultations

900 students sought individual consultations with SLC Peers, Facilitators, and Coordinators during FY 2007/08. Students primarily sought consultations for writing concerns, as these are linked to specific assignments – and deadlines. Just as for library reference questions, November and March were peak months due to term paper due dates.

b. Open registration workshops

946 students attended 107 of these workshops which were open to the entire SFU student body, with many offered at all three campuses. Popular topics included *On Your Way to an A*, a transition workshop for new students, *Top Ten Things to Know About University Writing*, *Creating an Effective Study Schedule*, and *Exam Strategies*.

SLC Coordinators also co-developed and/or co-facilitated open workshops with faculty members from History and Mathematics, program directors from the Centre for Distance and Online Education, and counsellors from Health and Counselling Services. These included topics such as *Overcoming Class Participation Anxiety*, *Math Study Tips You'll Be Glad You Have*, *Strategies for Success in Mathematics Courses and other Q-Course*, *Strategies For Success In Distance Education*, *Time Management*, and *Procrastination*.

c. Orientations

4855 students, faculty, and others received 68 SLC orientations. These presentations provide information about the SLC programs and services and are an important outreach to a variety of groups. This past year, the Foundations of Academic Literacy (FAL X99) curriculum embedded an SLC visit into all 29 sections reaching 435 students.

2. Course and program integrated activities

While many students are motivated to seek SLC consultations or attend workshops independently, all 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 contact the SLC each year to request presentations tailored to specific class, e.g. an introduction to field note writing for a CMNS class, information on effective lecture note-taking for a CRIM class, and writing strategies for TechOne.

In 2007/2008, the SLC was increasingly called upon to participate in large scale integrated programs, the most significant of which was the Academic Enhancement Program (AEP).

a. Academic Enhancement Program (AEP)

Developed by Dr. Diana Cuikerman, Computing Science, and SLC Learning Services Coordinator Donna McGee Thompson, the AEP seeks to integrate 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 beyond class activities. As well as developing the program, Diana Cuikerman and Donna McGee Thompson are also conducting ongoing research on its effects on student learning and success, and have published papers and spoken at numerous conferences on their work.

In its second year as a pilot, the AEP approach was adopted by CMPT in both Burnaby and Surrey, where Yosef Wosk Student Learning Commons (YWSLC) Coordinator Cynthia Wright works with

faculty and other instructors. A variety of departments consulted with the SLC towards incorporating AEP elements into courses or programs.

In 2007/2008, Donna McGee Thompson and Cynthia Wright co-facilitated the presentation of AEP content in 18 first year CMPT courses, reaching 577 students.

3. Summary Statistics April 2007-March 2008

	Consultations	Open workshops		Integrated workshops		Orientations	
		<i>sessions</i>	<i>attendees</i>	<i>sessions</i>	<i>attendees</i>	<i>sessions</i>	<i>attendees</i>
Apr 07 - Mar 08	900	107	946	68	1437	68	4855
Sept 06 - Mar 07*	436	76	643	29	1050	52	3995
% change	106%	41%	47%	134%	37%	31%	22%

*SLC launched Sept. 2006; N.B. SSP statistics reported separately below.

4. Student Success Program (SSP)

Headquartered in Student Advising and Success Programs, Student Services, the SSP is an academic success program for undergraduate students who have been Required to Withdraw. Students receive intensive advising, learning assessments, weekly seminars and individual consultations as part of the program. During the 2007/2008 pilot phase, students in the Faculty of Applied Science and all international students were eligible to participate.

The SLC's significant contribution to this program included participation in overall program development and planning, as well as development and implementation of specific core elements in partnership with representatives from Health Counseling Services, including learning assessment tools and processes, individualized learning plans, weekly seminar curriculum and facilitation, and special topic workshops.

Temporary funding from the SSP allowed the SLC to expand its staff by 1.5 Learning Services Coordinators, with Ruth Silverman and Mahara Sinclaire joining the SLC team in October 2007.

SSP Statistics September 07-March 08

Learning Plan Consultations	Learning Assessment Sessions	Weekly Seminars	Biweekly Seminars	Special Topic Workshops
155	15	90	15	7

5. English as Additional Language (EAL) services

The SLC's ability to provide English as Additional Language (EAL) services took a large step forward in January, with EAL/ESL specialist Tim Mossman joining the Coordinator team. As well as developing and presenting a series of specialized workshops targeting the oral, verbal and writing needs of English language learners, Tim also created a series of print materials and increased the array of EAL support materials available on the SLC web site. Students are able to consult with Tim for an assessment of their English proficiency and the development of a learning plan to increase their competency.

An enthusiastic team of SLC Peers led weekly English Conversation Groups (ECG) in Burnaby to provide English language learners with opportunities to practice verbal language skills, an important key to improving both oral presentation skills and foundational academic writing competency. A core group of primarily undergraduate students attended each semester and Tim Mossman will be working with the Peers to develop further activities and outreach for the ECG.

6. Graduate student programs

Building on the volunteer Peer model in place for undergraduate services, the SLC created paid Graduate Writing/Learning Facilitator positions in 2007/08. The qualifications and duties for these positions were developed by Writing Services Coordinator Dr. Amanda Goldrick-Jones, based on models from other institutions and, after vetting by Human Resources, SFUFA, APSA, CUPE and TSSU, the SLC was able to recruit excellent graduate students as Facilitators. Sarah Paynter and Arif Jamal, both from Human Geography, served as the initial Writing Facilitators, while Kathryn Ricketts and Tzy Horng, both from Education, joined as Writing/Learning Facilitators in the Fall.

Facilitators provided consultations for undergraduate and graduate students, co-facilitated graduate student targeted workshops such as *Publish, Don't Perish* in partnership with Coordinators, and created and presented workshops such as the *Grad Salon* writing and discussion series.

7. SFU Surrey services

Yosef Wosk SLC Coordinator Cynthia Wright organized, developed and presented SLC programs and services at SFU Surrey, in partnership with SLC Writing and Learning Coordinators and Facilitators, and a small team of Surrey-based SLC Peers. Notable programs this last year include facilitation of and participation in the Student Success and Academic Enhancement Programs cohorts based at Surrey, extensive in-class work with TechOne and Explorations, and the development of a pilot program to provide peer support for technology as a supplement to the Tech Bytes program for SIAT and TechOne.

With the opening of the long awaited door connecting the Yosef Wosk SLC area to the SFU Surrey library, rather than being at the end of a low traffic hallway, the YWSLC entrance is now through the very busy library, with SLC services and location promoted by a large poster in the library foyer.

8. SFU Vancouver services

Learning Services Coordinator Mahara Sinclair and Belzberg Library Branch head Karen Marotz worked together to enhance the SLC presence at SFU Vancouver. Rather than using temporary space in Harbour Centre lounges as in the previous year, Facilitators and Peers were able to offer regular consultation times in the library's new group study room, aided by a laptop and a portable selection of key print resources. This consistent, visible space led to an increase in consultations and the good news continued when donor Yosef Wosk, already a supporter of the SLC at SFU Surrey, provided funds to develop specialized SLC space within the Belzberg Library.

9. Burnaby space changes

Renovations continued in the SLC Office area in Burnaby with the creation of 2 Peer consultation rooms just outside the Office door. Each room was equipped with a computer workstation, a consultation table and chairs, and an array of print materials. A workroom for Facilitators was also created in the staff areas, including computer workstations, tables, and bookcases.

The Theses Assistant and her assistant, formerly housed in the SLC office, moved to a new location on the 7th floor of the Bennett library, freeing the offices needed by the expanded Coordinator team.

10. Online Services

In order to align with the established University look and feel, and to accommodate new content, the SLC undertook a redesign of its web site in Fall 2007. Spearheaded by Amanda Goldrick-Jones, with assistance from former Peer Janine Jongbloed, and Nina Saklikar of Library Systems, the new web site was launched to positive reviews in January 2008. Learning Services Coordinator Ruth Silverman and others created a large amount of new and useful content to populate the site, and SLC Assistant Darcy Wolfspirit maintained the content and organization. As well as e-versions of all handouts, the new site also provided links to a variety of writing and learning videos selected from college and university sites. Plans are underway to develop local video content in partnership with the Centre of Online and Distance Education.

Writing Services Coordinator Amanda Goldrick-Jones continued to explore e-tutoring techniques and service models, and has developed policies and procedures towards launching a pilot e-tutoring program in Summer 2008.

11. SFU Relations

Student Learning Commons' services are based on partnerships between diverse yet complimentary academic and student support areas. The SLC Director and Coordinators continued to meet with numerous individual faculty and faculty groups such as new faculty, to explain and promote SLC services, as well as to develop course and program integrated programs. These outreach activities also included liaison with faculty and staff from the Foundations of Academic Literacy and Foundations of Academic Numeracy courses, staff from Student Services areas such as Academic Advising, the Centre for Students with Disabilities, the First Nations Students' Centre, and many others.

The SLC Advisory and Articulation Committees, which include members from a variety of campus constituencies, met in Summer 07 to conduct a "mini-charette" space planning workshop, and the Advisory Committee met again in Spring 08. The Articulation Committee will meet in Summer 08.

The YWSLC Advisory Committee at Surrey is chaired by the YWSLC Coordinator and meets semesterly. The SLC Director is a member along with representatives from Surrey constituencies.

The SLC Director is an ex-officio member of the Senate Committee on Academic Integrity & the Learning Environment (SCAISLE) and the Senate Committee on University Teaching & Learning (SCUTL).

12. External Relations

The SLC Director and Coordinators participated in professional associations such as the Learning Specialists Association of BC (LSABC), the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA), the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) and the Canadian Association for Teachers of Technical Writing (CATTW), including monitoring and participating in discussions on related listservs, and attending and presenting at conferences.

A major project in Spring 07 was to plan, organize and present the 2nd annual Canadian Learning Commons Conference, April 29 – May 1, in partnership with the UBC Library / Irving K. Barber Learning Centre. This conference attracted over 100 participants from across Canada and the United States for informative presentations and ongoing discussions about the emerging learning commons service model.

13. SLC Staff 2007/2008

Director: Elaine Fairey
SLC Assistant: Darcy Wolfspirit

Coordinators:

English as an Additional Language (EAL), Tim Mossman
Learning Services, Donna McGee Thompson
Learning Services, Ruth Silverman
Learning Services, Mahara Sinclair
Writing Services, Amanda Goldrick-Jones
Yosef Wosk SLC Surrey, Cynthia Wright

Facilitators:

Sarah Paynter (March – July 2007)
Arif Jamal (July – October 2007)
Kathryn Ricketts (October 2007 -)
Tzy Horng Sai (February 2008 -)

Peers:

	Summer 07	Fall 07	Spring 08
Adam Way		✓	✓
Brittany Day		✓	✓
Carmen Hung	✓	✓	✓
Christine Kang	✓		✓
Colleen Cheung		✓	
Heather Fawcett		✓	✓
Jeff Miller		✓	✓
Jennifer Liu			✓
Jessica Shin		✓	✓
Jody Dickerson (SUR)		✓	
Kristen Sivertz		✓	✓
Natasha Patenaude	✓	✓	✓
Robyn Thomson		✓	✓
Stacy Kirpichova	✓	✓	✓
Stephanie Seebaran		✓	✓
Stevan Anas (SUR)		✓	

14. Selected “kudos”

The SLC solicits feedback on its services through a variety of formal and informal mechanisms, such as workshop evaluation forms, instructor-created forms, and other verbal and written comments. See http://learningcommons.sfu.ca/services/about/facts_feedback.htm for a selection of this feedback.

15. Selected publications & presentations

Elaine Fairey

Facilitator: "Learning Commons Retreat Day", Dunsmuir Lodge, UVIC, Aug 2007.

Presenter: "Front and Centre: the SFU Student Learning Commons", *Canadian Learning Commons Conference 2*, SFU & UBC, May 2007.

Panelist: "Going over to the Dark Side...and Seeing the Light: Tapping Your Inner Manager", *British Columbia Library Association Conference*, Burnaby, BC, April 2007.

Co-Presenter: "Kuhlthau and Beyond: Integrating the Information Seeking and Writing Processes", *British Columbia Library Association Conference*, Burnaby, BC, April 2007.

Amanda Goldrick-Jones

Presenter: [Online Collaborative Writing and the "Chat of Mankind"](#): an invited presentation / workshop for the *Teaching with Technology Conference*, University of Western Ontario, London, Dec. 2007.

Presenter: "Moving Writing 'Off-Centre'". Roundtable session for the *Canadian Association of Teachers of Technical Writing, Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities*, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, May 2007.

Co-Presenter: [Strategies and Structures for Writing in Digital Environments](#): an invited workshop for the *Canadian Association for Distance Education Conference*, Winnipeg Manitoba, 2007.

Co-Presenter: "Reading and Writing Digital Texts: Communicating in Online Learning Communities": an invited presentation for the *Canadian Association for Distance Education Conference*, Winnipeg Manitoba, May.

Co-Presenter: "Kuhlthau and Beyond: Integrating the Information Seeking and Writing Processes", *British Columbia Library Association Conference*, Burnaby, BC, April 2007

Donna McGee Thompson

Co-presenter: "Strategies to help TAs support student success and wellness", *TA/TM Day*, Learning and Instructional Development Centre (LIDC), SFU, Sept 2007 and Jan 2008.

Guest speaker: "Making a successful transition to university", 93.1 Red FM, August 2007.

Publication: Cukierman, D. & **McGee Thompson, D.** (2007). Learning strategies sessions within the classroom in computing science. Proceedings of WCCCE 2007, *12th Western Canadian Conference on Computing Education*, May 2007.

Publication: Cukierman, D. & **McGee Thompson, D.** (2007). Learning strategies sessions within the classroom in computing science. Extended abstract and poster presentation at ITICSE 2007, *12th Annual Conference on Innovation and Technology in Computer Science Education*, Dundee, Scotland, June 2007.

Publication: Fuller U., Johnson C., Ahoniemi T., Cukierman D., Hernán-Losada I., Jackova J., Lahtinen E., Lewis T.L., **McGee Thompson D.**, Riedesel C., Thompson E., (2007). Developing a computer science-specific learning taxonomy. *ACM SIGCSE Bulletin* 39(4) 152-170.

Co-presenter: **McGee Thompson D.** and Cukierman D. "Bringing Learning Support into the Q Classroom: A collaborative project between the Student Learning Commons and the School of Computing Science", *9th Symposium on Innovative Teaching*, SFU, May 2007.

Co-presenter: **McGee Thompson D.** and Cukierman D. "Learning instruction in the classroom: A model partnering the learning strategies specialist and the course instructor. What do students say?" Invited talk at the *Canadian Learning Commons Conference*, SFU, April 2007.

Ruth Silverman

Presenter: "Learning Styles", *TA/TM Day*, Learning and Instructional Development Centre (LIDC), SFU, January 2008.