

Student Learning Commons

Annual Report 2008/09

Elaine Fairey

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, and many other campus 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 2008/09

- Uptake of all SLC services continued to increase by leaps and bounds over the previous years of operation.
- Integrated programs such as the CMPT Academic Enhancement Program (AEP), TechOne writing workshops, and the large-scale Student Success Program continued to develop and expand.
- SLC Surrey added a “Technical Peer Educators” program to support IAT students and SLC Vancouver began offering regular consultation hours in the Belzberg Library’s new group study room.
- Writing Services Coordinator Renee McCallum and Learning Services Coordinator Kathryn Ricketts joined the SLC team, replacing Amanda Goldrick-Jones and Mahara Sinclair respectively; the Graduate Facilitator team increased to three and the SLC Peers team increased to 20.

Consultations

- 1984 students sought individual consultations with SLC Peers, Facilitators, and Coordinators during FY 2008/09, an increase of 112%. Students primarily sought consultations for writing concerns, although writing consultations also touched on time management, reading loads and other “learning” issues.
- Evening hours were offered at SLC Burnaby Wednesdays until 7pm, and SLC Vancouver offered a mix of day and evening hours. Feedback forms were provided for students to complete after each consultation and were very popular, soliciting a majority of very positive comments.

Open registration workshops

- 1252 students attended 128 of these workshops, open to the entire SFU student body and most offered at all three campuses. This represents an increase of 22% and 33% respectively.
- The August 2008 “Way to an A” transition workshops for incoming undergraduate students were so popular that eager students had to be turned away for the first time ever.
- 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).

Orientations

- 8997 students, faculty, and others received 86 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 participated in New Faculty and New Student Orientations, Information Evenings for prospective students and their parents, Surrey Open House and other events. Class visits included ENGL 100W, PHIL 100W, IAT 300W and others. The Foundations of Academic Literacy (FAL X99) curriculum embedded an SLC visit and orientation into all 32 sections reaching almost 500 students.

English as Additional Language (EAL) services

- This area continued to expand, with EAL Coordinator Tim Mossman developing and presenting a variety of open and tailored workshops and consultation services on grammar, accent reduction, paraphrasing and other skills. He was invited to present material to the CMPT Dual Degree program students, graduate Business students at Segal, TechOne and international students. The English Conversation Group, led by a team of Peers, increased its number of enthusiastic attendees after re-locating to the inviting open space outside the SLC Office.

Graduate students

- A variety of workshops were offered for graduate students, as well as individual consultations. Uptake continued to build slowly but a clear trend was seen in the type of student accessing the SLC, i.e. often “non-traditional” students who are perhaps less integrated with their departments and programs. Specialized services such as a “read ahead” program for graduate and honours students were developed for launch in Summer 2009.

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 exam preparation for over 300 Psyc 100 students, academic writing for 250 CMNS 130W students, writing and learning strategies for over 50 Residence students, teamwork for CMPT graduate students, and many more.
- **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. Last year, the CMPT Undergraduate Curriculum Committee approved the AEP as a required component of the CMPT undergraduate curriculum. Dr. Diana Cuikerman and Donna McGee Thompson continued to conduct ongoing research on its effects on student learning and success, publish papers and speak at conferences. At SFU Surrey, Cynthia Wright worked with CMPT faculty and other instructors to present and facilitate AEP activities. A variety of departments consulted with the SLC towards incorporating AEP elements into courses or programs. In 2008/2009, Donna McGee Thompson and Cynthia Wright facilitated the presentation of AEP content in 28 first year CMPT classes, reaching over 550 students.
- During the second pilot year of the **Student Success Program (SSP)**, Required to Withdraw students in the Faculty of Science joined those in the Faculty of Applied Science and all international students as eligible to participate in the SSP. At the end of 2009, Senate approved expansion of the program to all undergraduate students, and the name became “Back on Track” or BOT. Students on academic probation were also eligible to enroll. The SLC participated 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. Funding from the SSP allowed the SLC to expand its staff by 1.5 Learning Services Coordinators, and 3 part-time Grad Facilitators. **Over the year, SLC staff presented 18 Getting Started sessions; conducted 380 hour long learning plan consultations, and facilitated 156 weekly seminars.**

Selected Service Statistics April 08 – Mar 09

	Consultations	Open workshops		Integrated workshops		Orientations	
		<i>sessions</i>	<i>attendees</i>	<i>sessions</i>	<i>attendees</i>	<i>sessions</i>	<i>attendees</i>
April 08/March 09	1984	128	1252	77	3558	86	8997
April 07/March 08	937	105	938	60	2010	70	5380
% change	112%	22%	33%	28%	77%	23%	67%

For more details, see statistics at <P:\Keep\Student Learning Commons\stats>.