

# Writing, Learning, and EAL Services

## ANNUAL REPORT 2013/2014

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**Writing, Learning, and EAL Services** are delivered through both the Student Learning Commons (SLC) and the Research Commons (RC), with the SLC offering services primarily for undergraduate students and the RC offering services tailored for graduate students.

### HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2013/2014

- Overall, **Writing, Learning, and EAL (English as an Additional Language) Services** delivered
  - **3427 consultations** (3048 through the SLC; 379 through the RC)
  - **111 open workshops attended by 1018 students** (90 workshops through the SLC with 642 attendees, and 18 through the RC workshops with 335 attendees)
  - **147 course/program-integrated workshops attended by 4899 students** (138 workshops through the SLC with 4758 attendees; 9 through the RC with 141 attendees)

Further details about the focus and campus location of these services are provided in later sections of this report.

- The SLC was granted seed funding through the University's **EAL Implementation Project** for expanded undergraduate writing support benefitting EAL student writers which allowed the hiring of an additional Writing Service Coordinator and seven additional Graduate Writing Facilitators. The focus of this new Undergraduate Writing Team has been primarily two-fold: the expansion of our participation in the *WriteAway* (provincial consortium of online writing tutoring), and of our development and delivery of expanded discipline-specific writing services and resources. This new position also allowed the existing Writing Services Coordinator to focus almost solely on writing services for graduate students, thereby also expanding these services considerably.
- The SLC expanded SFU's participation in **WriteAway**, an online writing tutoring consortium of several post-secondary institutions in British Columbia (see next section for more details.)
- The Learning and Writing Peer Program's (Burnaby and Surrey campuses) application for re-certification was granted by the **College Reading and Learning Association's International Tutor Training Program Certification** (ITTPC) (Advanced) at Level 2, through September, 2018. With this certification, the Learning and Writing Peer Program is recognized as meeting the internationally accepted standard of tutor selection, training, experience, and evaluation.

- Renee McCallum, Writing Services Coordinator, won the 2013 Dean of **Graduate Studies Award for Excellence in Service** for demonstrated outstanding contributions to graduate education at SFU through her development and delivery of the Read-Ahead Program.
- Ruth Silverman and Donna McGee Thompson completed training and became **Certified Supplemental Instruction Supervisors**, positioning the SLC to be able to start a Supplemental Instruction/ Supported Learning Group program in the future.

## STUDENT LEARNING COMMONS SERVICES (Primarily Undergraduate)

**Consultations:** The Writing, Learning, and EAL team delivered 3048 one-on-one consultations through the Student Learning Commons in 2013/2014. Table 1 shows the distribution by consultation focus and campus. Consistent with previous years, the most highly sought area of focus by far was for help in Writing (93%).

Feedback from a student using SLC consultations services:

*Thank you for all the hard work that everyone has put in at the SLC. I've been coming here for the last 3 years and have seen a tremendous improvement in my writing. I'll definitely be recommending the SLC!*

**Table 1. SLC consultations by focus and campus. April 2013 - March 2014. N = 3048**

	Writing	Learning	EAL
<b>Burnaby</b>	2552	74	132
<b>Surrey</b>	190	11	5
<b>Vancouver</b>	80	5	0
	2822	89	137
<b>%</b>	93%	3%	4%

The SLC's participation in **WriteAway** (provincial online tutoring consortium) ramped up considerably, providing feedback on 376 papers submitted by SFU students. Over 50% of WriteAway users self-identified as EAL. Undergoing extensive training before serving as online tutors, seven Graduate Writing Facilitators raised our contribution of tutoring hours threefold (up from 10 hours per week to nearly 30 hours per week). These additional tutoring hours allowed us to broaden the scope of this service beyond the initial focus on writing-intensive courses offered by distance education, to include students in the Academics First and Back on Track programs, and select courses in Economics, Business, Psychology, Political Science, Environmental Studies, and English. In July 2013, Writing Services Coordinator Amanda Goldrick-Jones assumed the roles of WriteAway Institutional Coordinator and Tutor Trainer for SFU.

*I absolutely love using this website. I've always had difficulties in writing papers, and since I haven't taken English in about 2 years, I was really rusty in writing skills. Writeaway helped me improve my writing skills by pointing me towards my strong and weak points in writing. I don't think I will ever write a paper without using WriteAway.*

~Student using WriteAway

**EAL Services:** The **English Conversation Partner** program enjoyed a fourth highly successful year and was expanded to 30+ Peer Educators, which provided opportunities for 130 EAL students to have a conversation partner (approximately 900 direct service volunteer hours). This expansion also allowed us to extend our Conversation Partners program and Conversation Café to all three campuses. The SLC offered **Speaking Consultations** for the second year, delivering 121 of these bookable appointments with an EAL Peer to improve spoken English.

The SLC initiated two **research projects**, coordinated by Amanda Goldrick-Jones, that gauge the effectiveness of our writing services, with a particular focus on EAL student-writers. One project, approved by the SFU Office of Research Ethics), examines the effect of peer-review training combined with regular in-class writing support in BUS 360W – Business Communication. Another project, assisted by two Graduate Writing Facilitators, improves our ability to gather reliable data on clients' writing and learning concerns. This research will allow the SLC to better assess and enhance our undergraduate writing services to ensure we are meeting EAL writers' needs.

**Workshops:** The SLC offered 93 open workshops, attended by 683 students on such topics as *Getting the Most from Your Textbooks*, *Critical Thinking for Critical Writing*, and *Structuring Ideas through Grammar*.

**Program-Integrated Workshops:** The SLC delivered 138 course-integrated workshops tailored to specific courses, disciplines, or programs within class time, reaching 4758 students (an increase of 45% over last year.) Examples of integrated workshops include the following: *Argumentation and Integrating Sources* (ECON 355W), *Strategies for Peer Review* (BUSN 360W), and *Delivering Effective Presentations* (GS 422). Other program-integrated workshops were offered as part of the partnerships described in the next section. Table 2 provides a breakdown of workshops by campus (offerings through the SLC and RC combined.)

**Table 2. Writing, Learning, and EAL Workshops by Campus, April 2013 - March 2014. (Offerings through the SLC and RC combined.)**

		Open Workshops		Integrated Workshops	
		<i>Sessions</i>	<i>Attended</i>	<i>Sessions</i>	<i>Attended</i>
	April 13/March 14	57	640	114	4036
	April 12/March 13	56	477	103	2867
<b>Burnaby</b>	<i>% change</i>	↑2%	↑34%	↑11%	↑41%
	April 13/March 14	28	269	14	473
	April 12/March 13	21	153	10	327
<b>Surrey</b>	<i>% change</i>	↑33%	↑76%	↑40%	↑45%
	April 13/March 14	26	109	19	390
	April 12/March 13	30	98	5	85
<b>Vancouver</b>	<i>% change</i>	↓13%	↑11%	↑280%	↑359%

**Partnerships:** The *Academic Enhancement Program* (AEP), launched in 2006, is a collaborative program between the School of Computing Science (CS) and the SLC, co-developed and co-coordinated by Donna McGee Thompson, and Diana Cukierman, Computing Science Senior Lecturer. The AEP is a suite of student academic success activities run within, and tailored to, students in lower-division Computing Science, and more recently Engineering Science courses. Activities include two workshops designed and delivered as part of the course requirements for core first-year courses, and an “AEP elective” activity. For more information on the AEP program, please visit <http://www.sfu.ca/computing/undergraduate/student-life/academic-enhancement-program.html>. This year, the AEP delivered 31 workshops reaching 931 students. To date, more than 4,000 students have been served, spanning more than 40 courses through 19 semesters. The AEP team also collects and analyzes data as it runs the program, including anonymous student surveys, and has been approved by the SFU Office of Research Ethics, to use student data and responses in evaluation and educational research. Research has been supported by several grants, most recently from the Teaching and Learning Centre.

**Academics First Program:** The SLC continued to deliver academic success activities as part of the Academics First Program, which supports first-year student-athletes. Graduate Facilitators delivered several workshops tailored for this group. Ruth Silverman developed and provided training for

seventeen (17) Student Athlete Learning Coaches in August 2013. These upper-division varsity athletes with a high level of academic achievement provide academic coaching to first-year varsity athletes.

**Back on Track (BOT):** The SLC continued to be one of the major partners in the SFU Back on Track (BOT) program. This three-semester program offers students who have been required to withdraw from the University a second opportunity to achieve academic success in an environment characterized by high levels of support and accountability. The SLC BOT team delivered 720 **Learning Plan** consultations in 2013-14. Learning Plans are one-hour, one-on-one meetings with students entering the BOT program that identify the particular challenges and relevant strategies and resources for the individual student. A team of five Graduate Peer Learning Facilitators delivered the majority of these consultations across the three campuses with Learning Services Coordinators at Surrey and Burnaby also participating as needed. Graduate Peer Learning Facilitators (and occasionally Coordinators) also delivered 31 **Getting Started** sessions, which include group discussions about academic experiences and two self-assessments.

SLC Learning Services Coordinators at Burnaby and Surrey also co-instructed, with colleagues from Health and Counselling Services, a total of 26 **BOT 120** courses, and 9 **BOT 140** courses, with an average of 25 students per section. These 12-week courses guide students through a series of topics and self-management strategies associated with student success.

*...The time log journal was very-very effective for me. I am really glad we did that for our ...assignment. [...] I am wise about my time and note how much I spend doing what. And it surely does feel good to get things done on time and for some instances way ahead of time. Even right now, if it was just another day I would have been doing nothing productive but rather I am making an effort to get some readings done before class today. I cannot emphasize enough on how effective last week's assignment was for me. Thank you so much!*

~BOT 120 student

**Beedie School of Business:** The SLC began a partnership with the *Beedie School of Business* to offer resources (peers to help with Talk it Up) and workshops to EAL students.

**Peer Education:** Thirty-two (32) **EAL Peers** and 35 **Learning and Writing Peers** served as Peer Educators for one, two, or three semesters. Ruth Silverman, Learning Services Coordinator, continued as Divisional Supervisor, the primary trainer- supervisor, for the Learning & Writing Peers at Burnaby, as did Tim Mossman, EAL Services Coordinator, for EAL Peers, and Cynthia Wright, SLC Surrey Coordinator for Peers at SFU Surrey.

Peer Education aims to provide a professional development opportunity for the students who volunteer in these roles. In addition to receiving in-depth and ongoing training on topics relevant to their responsibilities, Peer Educators also receive support for self-selected *Personal and Professional Development* goals, such as public speaking or project management. Support for reaching these goals is offered by **Peer Coaches**, experienced Peers who advance with training into this role. 4 - 5 EAL and 4 - 5 Learning & Writing Peers assumed the coaching role each term.

## RESEARCH COMMONS (Graduate-Student Focused Services)

The Graduate Writing Team figured prominently in the *Thesis Boot Camp*, delivering both group sessions and one-on-one consultations to participants. The first offering of the Thesis Boot Camp was in May 2013, with three subsequent offerings in 2013-14. The Thesis Boot Camp team was given the Award for Outstanding Service, by Academic Librarians in Public Service (ALPS), in March 2014 for its delivery of this very successful program.

Our Graduate Writing Services team delivered 266 *Read-Ahead* consultations through the Research Commons this year, up from 120 in the 2012-13 academic year. The Read-Ahead service provides intensive and extended support for graduate students writing theses, projects, or any piece of writing with a longer deadline. Graduate students using this service submit the piece of writing they wish to discuss prior to their first appointment for pre-review by our Writing Services Coordinator, Renee McCallum, or one of our carefully selected and trained Graduate Peer Writing Facilitators. Here are two examples of feedback that students have provided on the Read-Ahead service:

*Thanks very much for your feedback and comments. They were extremely helpful! Next step: defense! But I have to say I am feeling more confident after reading your comments, so thanks.*

*In addition to THANKING YOU I thought I should let you know that your sense of things is very much in accord with my supervisor's thoughts. I have stopped trying to think about why I could not see this before, I am just excited to be able to try and move forward with much more optimism.*

~Students using the Read-Ahead service

Consultations for shorter pieces of writing became available to graduate students upon request by submitting the online *Consultation Request Form*. Through this intake process, graduate students can request to meet on the campus of their choice and at a mutually agreeable time. Students may also request to meet with Tim Mossman, EAL Services Coordinator, for English language concerns as desired. The Graduate Writing Team delivered 111 of these consultations.

Several **workshops** tailored to graduate students were offered through the Research Commons. Topics included *Writing and Researching Your Literature Review* (co-led with a Librarian), *Time Management for Graduate Students*, and *Presentation Skills for Graduate Students*.

EAL Coordinator Tim Mossman began a partnership with the *School of Communication's new Double Degree (MA)* in Global Communications program by designing and delivering a short-term writing course for the first cohort of Chinese students from the Communication University of China.

## **LIBRARY AND UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The Learning, Writing, and EAL team contributed to the Library and University communities in a number of ways this year. Here are some examples:

Our team participated in 14 orientation events for prospective and current undergraduate and graduate students, parents, Residence Life staff, and new Teaching Assistants/Tutor Markers (TA/TMs.)

The SLC played a large role in the new SFU Orientation format for August 2013, responsible for coordinating input from several groups on campus to then develop and deliver 45-minute workshops on academic success strategies for new students.

The SLC-Surrey participated in the inaugural “De-Stress Fest”, an SFU Surrey campus-wide event delivered at the start of exam period to provide students with strategies for effective exam preparation.

In Spring 2014 SLC Learning Services Coordinator, Ruth Silverman, joined and actively participated in SFU’s Orientation Working Committee, tasked with reimagining first-year orientation to university as a year-long process involving a combination of in-person and online activities. Ideally, this reimagined and broadened orientation will provide a smoother integration into SFU for students, and Ruth’s participation on the committee will work towards better academic preparation and an increased awareness of academic support resources among first-year students.

Ruth Silverman and Donna McGee-Thompson delivered a presentation at two Library All-Staff Meetings in November 2013, “Who Are the Peers and What Do They Do?”, contributing to a greater understanding of SLC Peers among Library staff.