



Writing, Learning, and EAL Services ANNUAL REPORT 2014/2015

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. Both streams of programming include three main categories: consultations, workshops open to the general student population, and program/course-integrated workshops, tailored to a specific university course or program.

SUMMARY STATISTICS FOR 2014/2015

- Overall, **Writing, Learning, and EAL (English as an Additional Language) Services** delivered
 - **3714 consultations** (3103 through the SLC; 611 through the RC)
 - **130 open workshops attended by 1273 students** (89 workshops through the SLC, with 571 attendees; 41 workshops through the RC, with 702 attendees)
 - **140 course/program-integrated workshops attended by 4226 students** (126 workshops through the SLC, with 3977 attendees; 14 workshops through the RC, with 249 attendees)

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

STUDENT LEARNING COMMONS SERVICES (Primarily Undergraduate)

Consultations: The Writing, Learning, and EAL team delivered 3103 one-on-one consultations through the Student Learning Commons in 2014/2015. 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 (95%).

Table 1. SLC consultations by focus and campus. April 2014 - March 2015. N = 3103

	Writing	Learning	EAL(Speaking)
Burnaby	2672	90	51
Surrey	184	11	0
Vancouver	84	10	1
	2940	111	52
%	95%	3.5%	1.5%

While the majority of undergraduate consultations are delivered in-person, we have been offering online writing consultations since July 2012, through our participation in **WriteAway**, a provincial online tutoring consortium. With Writing Services Coordinator, Amanda Goldrick-Jones, in the role of WriteAway Institutional Coordinator and Tutor Trainer for SFU, our participation in WriteAway has grown steadily since we joined, and in 2014-15, 571 papers were submitted by SFU students (up from 376 last year). This year we continued to contribute a strong number of tutoring hours to the service, with up to seven Graduate Writing Facilitators contributing a total of up to 30 hours per week, the highest in the consortium. However, even with these additional tutoring hours, we have yet to reach a level of staffing that will allow us to open the service to the general undergraduate student population. We continue to strategically increase the scope of the service, reaching out to new programs or courses each year. Programs we currently promote the WriteAway service to include writing-intensive courses offered by distance education, Academics First (varsity student-athletes) and Back on Track programs (students in academic difficulty), and select courses in a number of departments.

Feedback from students using the WriteAway service:

The feedback was very thorough and relevant! I really appreciated the suggestions that the tutor made and the links to resources that the tutor provided. I also appreciated that the tutor took the time to point out things that I had done well and it made me feel confident to know that it was enjoyable to read. This was my first time using the tutoring service, and I will definitely be using it again in the future!

I appreciate the assistance of making myself a stronger writer, making my paper stronger, and as a result getting a better mark on my paper!!! I also like that I am given resources that I can mark and return to at a later date when I need to refresh or remember how to make a strong intro, abstract, or conclusion. Tutors have been very cordial (over the internet), respectful, and timely! Thank you for this excellent service!

EAL Services: Historically, we have not distinguished Writing and Learning services for students who have English as an additional language (EAL) from services for the general student population. Instead we have preferred to deliver services that are designed to benefit all students. The exception has been in our services and programs supporting English speaking and conversation, described further below. However, with an increased focus at the university on supporting EAL students more deliberately, we have started to assess the number of self-identified EAL students accessing our writing services, and the kinds of help they are seeking. To this end, Writing Services Coordinator Amanda Goldrick-Jones, continued work on two research projects, to assess the impact of our writing services, with a particular focus on EAL student-writers.

For the first project, we have started using wholly online client reports filled out by peers after consultations. This has allowed us to see whether clients had *no* EAL concerns, *some* EAL concerns, or *entirely or mainly* EAL concerns, as well as what those concerns were. Here are some highlights:

In Fall 2014, 41% of our clients had at least some EAL concerns. This increased to 55.2% in Spring 2015, with half of these consultations being “entirely or mainly” about EAL issues.

In Fall 2014, 20% of EAL students visited the SLC two or three times or more.

The most common EAL concerns are cohesion, paragraph development, sentence logic, use of articles, and word choice/vocabulary.

Business students are by far our largest client-base. For Fall 2014, a random sampling of booked appointments by self-identified EAL clients indicated that 25 – 30% were from Business. In Spring 2015, 18.5% of all clients with EAL concerns were from Business. The next most popular faculty is Criminology (7% in Spring).

The WriteAway administrative centre collected similar data showing that over 50% of WriteAway users self-identified as EAL.

The second project, approved by the SFU Office of Research Ethics, is examining the effect of peer-review training combined with regular in-class writing support in BUS 360W – Business Communication. Participants in one instructor’s BUS 360W sections have been invited to reflect on their experiences with peer review and provide samples of peer-reviewed writing. The project is looking at the effects of supported peer review on EAL students’ confidence in their abilities to review peers’ writing, and on course performance. According to a small number of voluntary surveys so far, we are seeing greater confidence about recognizing strengths and weaknesses in a peer’s paper, and less concern about the ability to do peer review or offending the writer. An analysis of “before and after” grades over four semesters predicts that students in one of the writing/peer-support sections will achieve, on average, at least half a letter-grade more than students without that support. To be completed: an analysis of participants’ drafts and revisions to look for specific indications of writing improvement.

In the area of English speaking, the **Conversation Partner Program** continued to be very popular, with EAL Peer Educators meeting weekly for one term with more than 150 students who speak English as an

Additional Language over the year (1623 direct service volunteer hours). The impact of the program is captured in statements made by students such as this one:

Before I took the Conversation partner program, I was having communication difficulties with my peers/tutorial mates when participating in debates as well as casual conversations. The main reason of the difficulty was that, because I'm non-native, I have less time speaking in English, and when I talk with Canadian peers, I get too much nervous and take too much time thinking what I want to say. This program helped me overcome the nervousness when talking, and also increased overall English proficiency.

~Participant in the Conversation Partner Program

Tim Mossman, EAL Coordinator, had conversations with David Paterson, Associate Dean of Education (Administration), & Acting Director, **Centre for English Language Learning, Teaching, and Research (CELLTR)** about the possibility of collaborating with CELLTR on an impact assessment of the Conversation Partner program.

The 'Conversation Café' underwent a name change, to simply, **'Let's Talk'**. Also, with colleagues from the Beedie School of Business, Tim Mossman coordinated a **Let's Talk Business pilot project**. This discipline-based English conversation practice program was offered to EAL students enrolled in Business 201, 202 & 360 (W) and facilitated by EAL Peer Educators. Tim also piloted other conversation groups this year, including **Let's Talk Psychology** and **Vancouver Stories**.

Workshops: The SLC offered 89 open workshops, attended by 571 students on such topics as *Polish Your Writing: Clarity and Concision; Academic Reading for Maximum Effectiveness; Language Strategies for Using Sources in Academic Writing*. Dal Sohal and Ruth Silverman collaborated on a developing and delivering a new *Procrastination* workshop. Further details are provided below in Table 2.

Program/Course-Integrated Workshops: The SLC delivered 126 workshops that were tailored for, and integrated into, specific courses, disciplines, or programs, reaching 3977 students. Examples of integrated workshops include these: BUS 360W "Writing Boot Camp"; thesis-building and integrating sources for CMNS/FIC 130; a pre-final exams workshop for the Stress Reliever Club; and academic strategies workshops as part of the Indigenous Student Centre's CEDAR workshop series.

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 2014 - March 2015. (Offerings through the SLC and RC combined.)

	Open Workshops		Integrated Workshops	
	Sessions	Attended	Sessions	Attended
Burnaby				
April 14/March 15	74	879	113	3450
April 13/March 14	57	640	114	4036
Surrey				
April 14/March 15	29	259	12	507
April 13/March 14	28	269	14	473
Vancouver				
April 14/March 15	27	135	15	269
April 13/March 14	26	109	19	390

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, courses in lower-division Computing Science, and more recently Engineering Science. 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 33 workshops reaching 1061 students. To date, more than 5,000 students have been served, spanning 22 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.

Donna and Diana were recognized as SFU's *Healthy Campus Community Champions* for 2014, for developing and coordinating the Academic Enhancement Program (AEP), and supporting student learning in the Faculty of Applied Sciences.

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 fourteen (14) Student Athlete Learning Coaches in August 2014. 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 722 **Learning Plan** consultations in 2014-15. 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 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 33 **Getting Started** sessions, which include group discussions about academic experiences and two self-assessments.

This program has been an amazing journey. I have discovered so much about myself. I have learned that I am capable of many things and need to be self-motivated. This journal has helped me discover tools to help me learn and the many different learning [approaches] there were. I used to think I wasn't capable or good enough, but I have slowly realized that I am capable of becoming a really successful student in university.

I got my grades for this term and I got an A- and B in my classes. I am very happy and I want to thank you A LOT because BOT 140 this term really pushed me.

~Students in the Back on Track Program

A significant moment for me in May was when I had participation in BOT 120 of a student that I previously had a learning plan with. This particular student was quite troubled when I initially spoke with him and was experiencing some serious social issues. So when he raised his hand in a BOT 120 class and answered a question, I was quite pleased that he felt comfortable enough in that environment to speak up!

~Carlye Vroom, BOT Instructor

SLC Learning Services Coordinators at Burnaby and Surrey also co-instructed, with colleagues from Health and Counselling Services, multiple sections of the program's courses, BOT **120** and **BOT 140**, 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.

Peer Education: Approximately sixty-five carefully selected SFU students served as Peer Educators for one, two, or three semesters, providing thousands of hours of service to fellow students through one-to-one meetings and small group activities related to Learning, Writing, and English communication. Amanda Goldrick-Jones joined Ruth Silverman, as Co-Divisional Supervisor for the Learning & Writing Peers at Burnaby. Tim Mossman, EAL Services Coordinator, continued in this role 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.

We were very pleased that this year, Omeed Lakhani, SLC Learning & Writing Peer Educator, won the inaugural **SFU Library Undergraduate Award**.

RESEARCH COMMONS (Graduate-Student Focused Services)

The graduate writing team is coordinated by Writing Services Coordinator, Renee McCallum, and delivers services primarily through the Research Commons, headed by Nicole White. This year the team launched the new **'Write'** suite of programs this year. Included under this brand were **Write Conversations**, delivered several times per term, which offers graduate students an opportunity to discuss in a small group setting a particular area of writing such as, *Expectations of Graduate Level Writing; The Importance of Setting Achievable Goals; and Making Your Writing More Concise*. **The Open Writing Lab: Write Time, Write Space**, gives graduate students a dedicated space and time in which to write with consultation services on hand. **Write right: Expectations and the writing process for graduate students**, is a full-day workshop that allows graduate students to learn more about the expectations of graduate writing and the writing process.

In the Spring 2015 term, Karen Marotz, Head of the Belzberg Library, was successful in securing space for graduate writing services in Vancouver, for weekly blocks of time, making it possible for these programs to be offered regularly at that campus.

The Graduate Writing Team played a major role again in the **Thesis Boot Camp**, delivering both group sessions and one-on-one consultations to participants. This three-day intensive workshop offers graduate students an opportunity to dedicate focused time on their thesis while working in a comfortable environment with writing and research support on site. The Thesis Boot Camp was offered five times this year, three times in Burnaby, once in Surrey and once in Vancouver. Approximately 25 students attended each offering.

Our Graduate Writing Services team delivered 415 **Read-Ahead** consultations this year through the Research Commons (up from 266 last 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.

I just emailed the second draft to my prof. Thank you for the excellent feedback and for helping me put it all together in a concise way over the last week. Thanks for being there for me consistently and continuously over the past week, which is the only reason I was able to get it done close to the... deadline. My birthday is tomorrow! YAYY awesome to know I can actually enjoy it and don't have to work or feel guilty about working. Thank you thank for the best birthday gift!

~Student using the Read-Ahead service

The Graduate Writing Team also offered several **workshops** tailored to graduate students through the Research Commons. Topics included *An Introduction to Graduate Writing*; *Writing and Researching Your Literature Review* (co-led with a Librarian); *Drafting*; and *Time Management for Graduate Students*. Statistics are included in the Summary Statistics section on page 1.

LIBRARY & 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 several orientation events for prospective and current undergraduate and graduate students, parents, Residence Life staff, faculty, and new Teaching Assistants/Tutor Markers (TA/TMs.)

As a previous award winner, **Renée McCallum** sat on the selection committee for the next winner of the ***Department of Graduate Studies Award for Service***.

Our team participated in coordinating activities for and hosting the ***Bennett Library Third Floor Renewal Celebration***, May 2014.

We became more actively involved in the WriteAway provincial consortium this year with Megan Robertson, SFU Graduate Facilitator and WriteAway Tutor, becoming the ***WriteAway Master Tutor***, and Donna McGee Thompson, becoming Chair of the ***WriteAway Advisory Committee***.

The SLC hosted a visit by ***Karen Davis, Associate Director, Student Academic Services (Retention, Achievement & Equity), Victoria University***, Wellington, and Vice-President (New Zealand) for the Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association (ANZSSA). Ms. Davis was visiting several North American universities to learn about various student support models

Ruth Silverman began serving as Chair of the **Academic Preparation Subcommittee of the Orientation Working Committee**. Cynthia Wright served as a member. The subcommittee developed proposals to enhance the academic preparation of first year students.

Ruth Silverman and Dal Sohal at different times actively participated on the **Staff Development Committee** and delivered sessions for **Staff Development Day**.

Donna McGee Thompson continued to serve as a member of the Steering Committee for the new **Centre for English Language Learning Teaching and Research** (CELLTR) (led by the Faculty of Education).

We hosted an SLC visit by **CELLTR guest, Dr. Fiona Henderson**, Senior Lecturer, Academic Language and Learning & Coordinator of the Student Learning Unit, Victoria University, Australia. Donna McGee Thompson and Tim Mossman also attended a talk by Dr. Henderson, hosted by CELLTR and the TLC, on strategies for creating effective partnerships and improving student participation and success, including EAL retention. March 2015.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

Members of the Learning, Writing, and EAL team participated in a variety of conferences this year:

Several SLCers attended a talk hosted by the Task Force on Flexible Education, "*Our students are changing, are we prepared?*" by Jan Unwin, superintendent of graduate and student transitions in B.C.'s Ministries of Education and Advanced Education.

Amanda Goldrick-Jones

Presented at the SFU Symposium on Teaching and Learning: "Myths, Opportunities, and Challenges of Building Peer Review into the Writing Process" (with Shauna Jones). May 2014.

Presented at the Canadian Association for the Study of Writing and Discourse: "'I'm Not a Grammar Expert': Reducing Peer-Review Anxiety in a Business Writing Class." Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, St Catharines ON. May 2014.

Attended "Writing without Borders"—The Canadian Writing Centres Association conference, May 2014, and the Canadian Association for the Study of Writing and Discourse conference. May 2014

Delivered a session for TA/TM Day — "Coaching, Not Correcting: How to Work with Students' Writing" - and spoke briefly at the Opening Plenary about our services that support teaching and learning.

Renée McCallum

Attended the **14th Annual Symposium on Teaching and Learning: Provocative Pedagogy**, SFU. May 2014.

Donna McGee Thompson

Attended the **Learning Specialists Association of Canada - Pacific Regional Conference, 'Scaffolding for Student Success,'** at UBC - Okanagan, Kelowna. May 2014.

Co-presented a workshop with Diana Cukierman, entitled, 'Challenging first-year computing science and engineering students' ideas about learning: The making of a workshop,' at the **14th Annual Symposium on Teaching and Learning: Provocative Pedagogy**, SFU. May 2014.

Attended the **Learning Specialists' Association of Canada** Pacific Region Conference at the Justice Institute. December 2014.

Ruth Silverman

Attended the **Learning Specialists Association of Canada - Pacific Regional Conference, 'Scaffolding for Student Success,'** at UBC - Okanagan, Kelowna. May 2014

Attended the **Learning Specialists' Association of Canada** Pacific Region Conference at the Justice Institute. December 2014.

Presented "Peer Coaches: Helping Peer Tutors Reach the Summit of Success" at the Northwest Tutoring Centre Conference (NWTCC), Green River Community College, Auburn, WA. February 2015.

Cynthia Wright

Attended the 'On Course' Conference, Costa Mesa, CA. April 2014.

Members of the 'Learning' team (Cynthia, Donna, Dal, and Ruth)

Started a **Journal Club**, every month reading one noteworthy journal article from the learning field and meeting to discuss it.

Ruth Silverman and Donna McGee-Thompson **co-facilitated a webinar** entitled, "**Peer Coaching: The Next Step in Skills Development for Peer Tutors**", Learning Specialists Association of Canada (LSAC). April 2014.