

Writing Lab Report
Working with International Students
May 14, 2012 to May 3, 2013



Vicki Kennell, Ph.D.
ESL Specialist

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Abstract

In recent years, the percentage of Writing Lab clients who are non-native speakers of English has increased significantly. As a result of this shift from largely domestic to largely international clientele, the ESL Specialist position was created to address the changing needs of students and tutors. This report documents those needs and provides details of my work in the following areas:

- **One-on-one writing consultations**

The mainstay of the Writing Lab's program is the writing consultation. From May 14, 2012 to May 3, 2013, 71.84% of our clients self-identified as international students. The vast majority of all of our clients (97%-98%) feel that the tutorials are useful and conducted in a respectful way.

- **Language study for international clients**

The Writing Lab offers self-study options for international students and scholars who are seeking to improve their overall language skills. Individuals may use our ESL library and our small collection of ESL software to work at their own pace whenever the Writing Lab is open. In addition, we offer a daily conversation group at which attendees can practice their oral language skills, acquire new vocabulary, and ask questions related to life and study in the United States.

- **Training for tutors who work with international students**

In order to address our tutors' needs for knowledge and skills specific to second language writing, I instituted an intensive, semester-long training program. Over the course of spring semester, tutors gained background knowledge about working with international students and created materials for immediate use with clients and for ongoing use as training materials in other contexts.

- **Pilot programs for graduate student writing**

In conjunction with Laurie Pinkert, the Writing Lab held a series of four workshops and eight writing retreats for graduate students. Many attendees expressed their interest in continuing this program.

With the help of graduate tutor Scott Partridge, I ran a five-session writing group for graduate students in Professor Mike Mickelbart's lab. These sessions enabled the graduate students to share their writing and receive feedback from their peers and from writing experts. Evaluation of this program will be forthcoming in the near future.

- **Campus and community interactions**

I served as a resource on second language writing for a wide variety of individuals and groups during the 2012-2013 academic year. This involved one-on-one meetings, large-group presentations, panel participation, and email conversations.

The initial section of this report explores possibilities for continuing the work the Writing Lab has begun this year and notes the resources necessary for doing so. I then offer some background material that helps to explain the realities facing the Writing Lab today, followed by a detailed explanation of the programs listed above and an evaluation of their successes over the past year.

Directions for the Future

Planning for the future requires that I consider the needs of various parties as well as logistics. The following section explains the needs of students, tutors, and faculty/staff as I see them, then offers some possibilities for meeting writing-related needs in the future. Most of these possibilities would require additional resources in the way of funding, people, or space, and I have indicated those needs as well.

Student Needs

Incoming international students need, above all else, language skills that will allow them to succeed at Purdue both academically and socially. Experts at Purdue suggest that either they should be admitted with the requisite skill level (as determined by TOEFL scores or some other combination of measures), or Purdue should provide the necessary services to raise language skills to the required level. At the moment, language needs are served by a piecemeal arrangement of international sections of courses here, Writing Lab consultations there, and a myriad of other bits and pieces limited to particular individuals (OEPP classes for prospective TAs, for instance). For those students who are proactive enough to seek these offerings and who are quick enough to secure a place in programs with limited space, these solutions seem to work well enough. But what of those who fall through the cracks of this safety net of language help? If Purdue hosts 8,000 international students, and if the Writing Lab has 34 tutors available, then each tutor would have to work with 235 students to provide writing help (and the language help that often accompanies it) for all of them. With numbers like this, in any given semester, each student could work no more than one time—one 30-minute time—with a consultant. Research shows that for writing, as for language acquisition in general, ongoing work is required for improvement; the Writing Lab within its current limits of space and funded tutoring hours, can only meet this need for a fraction of Purdue's 8,000 international students—and doing so fully and completely would require ignoring the needs of the 30,000 or so domestic students. It would seem that we have three options: raise TOEFL scores, provide an intensive language school, or expand Purdue's current system of piecemeal help to enable more students to take advantage of the available services and to increase the number and range of those services.

Writing Lab Tutor Needs

Incoming tutors need immediate information about working with international students, as well as access to resources and support as they begin tutoring. Returning tutors need ongoing development as they hone the skills acquired in previous years of tutoring. Both groups need to be made aware of ongoing developments in the field of second language writing.

Faculty and Staff Needs

Those who work with the writing of international students, especially faculty who are responsible for assessing it, need exposure to the principles of working with second-language writers. In addition, faculty and staff need to be offered strategies for encouraging the

development of the students they work with, strategies such as those offered through the example of the Graduate Writing Retreats.

Plans for Meeting These Needs

- Continue existing language services at the Writing Lab: consultations (writing), ESL books (grammar, vocabulary, idioms), ESL software (listening), Conversation Groups (speaking)
 - With additional resources, some of these services could be expanded. For instance, with a larger space and more leaders, Conversation Groups could be multiplied to allow for more attendees.
- Expand the tutor training program
 - Create an online course that allows tutors to work on appropriate skills and knowledge.
 - Make use of local and Purdue experts who can provide insight into the experiences of international students here and knowledge about working within specific cultural expectations.
- Continue and expand the Graduate Writing Retreats
 - With additional funding, this successful program could be turned into a regular feature of the academic year. For instance, a series of four workshops on graduate/faculty-level academic writing could be held each year and paired with more frequent writing-only sessions. Necessary resources include room space and funding to hire appropriate numbers of tutors and workshop presenters.
- Further explore the need for Writing Groups
 - If faculty continue to express interest in lab-based writing groups, we could explore developing our pilot program further. Additional funding for tutor-facilitators would be necessary to make it possible for multiple writing groups to be held for longer time periods.
- Create a week-long intensive writing program for international graduate students
 - A session like this could be run during Maymester or over winter break. Initially, there would be very little need for additional resources beyond the purchase of books for use during the course. If the program proved successful, more resources would be needed to continue and expand the course; for instance, a larger number of attendees would require a larger space than the Writing Lab can currently supply and might also necessitate some funded tutoring hours.
- Continue serving as a campus resource on the subject of second language writing

Background

In recent years, the percentage of Writing Lab clients who are non-native speakers of English has increased. During the 2006-2007 academic year, 25% of clients self-identified as non-native speakers. The following year that number rose to 42%. This past year, between May 14, 2012 and May 3, 2013, 71.84% of Writing Lab clients self-identified as non-native speakers (Table 1). This increase over the last few years has resulted in a number of concerns related to working with the writing of second-language writers. Compared with domestic students, international students need more help in their writing with sentence-level problems—grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure—along with the issues of organization and content that they share with their domestic peers. They may also need cultural input related to the assignment or to North American academic expectations. At the same time, the Writing Lab tutors begin their job with little or no knowledge of or training in second language acquisition in general, or in second language writing in particular. Tutors are faced, daily or even hourly, with writers needing help that the tutors are not necessarily trained to give. Although one graduate tutor served as ESL Coordinator each year, the few hours per week allotted to this position allowed little in the way of in-depth training for tutors.

Domestic and International Use	Percentage of Use
Visits from United States	28.16%
Visits from other countries	71.84%
Most Frequent Use by Country of Origin	Times Used
China	2922
United States	1677
Korea	527
Taiwan	167
Malaysia	132

Table 1: International Use of the Writing Lab, May 14, 2012 – May 3, 2013

In order to address this situation, I was hired as ESL Specialist in August of 2012 to develop tutors' skills and to expand Writing Lab services for our international clients. I have spent the last academic year maintaining and updating the existing services for international students—language study materials, conversation groups, and informational flyers—and expanding the offerings for both clients and tutors—intensive tutor training and pilot programs for graduate writing. I have also served as a resource to the wider campus and community on matters related to ESL writing and language needs. The remainder of this report provides more detailed information on the work the Writing Lab does with international students, on the ways in which we have been improving that work in the last year, and on the success of the various services we provide in meeting the needs of Purdue's international students and scholars.

One-on-One Consultations

The mainstay of our program is the 30-minute appointment in which an individual meets one-on-one with a writing consultant for feedback and assistance on any aspect of any writing project. Of the 71.84% of our clients who self-identify as international students, around 71% are undergraduate students. The remaining 29% are divided between graduate students (27%) and “other” (2%) (Table 2). The “other” category includes international clients who are in the US as visiting scholars.

International Client Use by Classification			
	Undergraduate	Graduate	Other
Consultations	2193	821	59
Conversation Groups	255	255	193

Table 2: International Classification Data, May 14, 2012 – May 3, 2013

International clients bring the same types of writing to appointments as their domestic peers: class-assigned essays, resumes and other job-search materials, journal articles, dissertation chapters, and personal statements and other graduate program application materials. In addition, they come with more language-specific needs; most recently, one of our clients stated a specific goal of improving on the writing portion of the TOEFL test. The tutors she worked with requested information from me about the test and the requirements of the writing portion, and then worked with the student to help her improve this very specific genre of writing. Over the course of the weeks they worked with her, the tutors were able to see great improvement in her writing. This student’s experience highlights the needs of both tutors and international clients with respect to writing. The tutors need access to knowledge about second language writing (including to specific genres such as TOEFL essays) and to training in working with second language writers. I began to address these tutor needs this year as described in the section on training for tutors.

The needs of our international clients are more difficult to address. As the example above shows, writers generally, and language learners in particular, will progress further with their skills if they have the opportunity for long-term, ongoing help with their language needs. The difficulties an international student faces with writing in English cannot be solved with one 30-minute tutorial, nor can such a tutorial address all of an individual’s needs for other forms of language help. Although the Writing Lab would happily work with individuals and their writing on a regular basis—and does so for the small number who make and keep such appointments—we are constrained by our focus to working mainly with writing rather than language generally, and by the limits of space and funded tutoring hours in the numbers of students we can help. Logistics dictate that thirty-four part-time tutors cannot meet all the language needs of 8,000 plus international students.

Despite these limits to what the Writing Lab can provide, the evaluations we collect from all of our clients demonstrate overwhelmingly that Writing Lab clients are very satisfied with the writing help they receive. Although we have not separated out the responses of our international clients from our domestic clients, the large number of international clients (71.84%) combined with the high degrees of satisfaction (97%) demonstrated in Table 3 would seem to indicate that the majority of our international clients share these positive responses.

Student Evaluations of Individual Consultations	Student Responses	Percentage
The tutor explained ideas to me in a way I can understand and use.		
Agree	5410	97%
Somewhat agree	137	2%
Disagree	11	<1%
Don't know	6	<1%
The tutor addressed my concerns.		
Agree	5384	97%
Somewhat agree	163	3%
Disagree	11	<1%
Don't know	6	<1%
The tutor made me feel comfortable and respected during my tutorial.		
Agree	5451	98%
Somewhat agree	95	2%
Disagree	12	<1%
Don't know	6	<1%

Table 3: Summary of Consultation Evaluations for All Clients (Domestic and International)
 May 14, 2012 – May 3, 2013

The most common complaint is that appointments are too short, and students wish they had more time with consultants. Again, this is an area where the Writing Lab is limited by available resources; we lack the space and the funded tutoring hours to provide increased time with consultants.

Language Study for International Clients

The Writing Lab maintains materials that Purdue affiliates may use for English language self-study: books, software, and resource listings. The ESL library contains books on a range of topics, including vocabulary, writing, and grammar. Individuals are permitted to read and study from these materials any time the Writing Lab is open. Tutors use the materials to help answer specific questions from clients or to improve their own skills in order to better address client

needs during tutorials. Additions to the library this year included several books for client use along with some updated materials for use in training tutors.

For client use:

- *Grammar Troublespots*
- *Academic Vocabulary in Use*
- *The Writing Template Book*
- *Thesis and Dissertation Writing in a Second Language*
- *Why is English Like That*

For tutor training:

- *One on One With Second Language Writers*
- *The ESL Writer's Handbook*
- *Understanding Your International Students*
- *What Do International Students Think and Feel?*
- *Writing Myths*
- *Second Language Acquisition Myths*
- *Principles and Practices for Response in Second Language Writing*
- *The Language Instinct*

The software housed in the Writing Lab covers a variety of language topics: business English, vocabulary, grammar, listening skills, and TOEFL skills. This year, the main project for updating the software consisted of determining which programs were outdated and which were still usable. In the future, we hope to track the demand for this service in order to determine whether or not to replace outdated programs.

Because the Writing Lab is not a *language lab*, per se, we lack the resources to offer much in the way of general language support within the lab itself. In order to help our clients with these needs, we maintain a Community Resources page that lists information about various language classes and programs at Purdue and in the surrounding community. I will be updating this list once a year, in August. Information that I receive at other times will be posted briefly on the front door of the Writing Lab and then long-term on our ESL bulletin board. The new resource for this academic year was the creation of a list of local individuals, including Second Language Studies graduate students, who work as ESL tutors. There has been a fair amount of community interest both ways—individuals looking for tutors and individuals willing to be tutors—with the Writing Lab often serving as the go-between due to the creation of the “ESL Specialist” position. Individuals expressing interest in finding a language tutor were often forwarded to me. With the creation of the tutoring list, I had specific information to immediately pass on to them.

In addition to these resources for self-study, the Writing Lab continues to hold daily Conversation Groups, allowing international students and scholars the chance to practice

spoken English and listening skills with a small group of fellow internationals. The hour-long groups are facilitated each day by a different Writing Lab tutor, who provides some structure around which to discuss weekly themes and who serves as a language advisor with respect to idiomatic structures and other vocabulary questions. The groups regularly address issues related to speaking fluency, pronunciation, listening skills, vocabulary, cultural knowledge, and grammar. The weekly themes cover a broad range of topics related to life (holidays, food, sports) and to vocation (education, jobs, interviews). New for this year was the production of brief training videos to help conversation group leaders grasp the various methods and potential pitfalls associated with facilitating a group as opposed to teaching a class.

The Conversation Groups are the most heavily-used of our in-lab resources for language study, with 742 uses during the 2012-2013 academic year. In the fall semester, we had the happy problem of too many attendees, with a record of 17 on a single day mid-semester. Despite the large numbers, those who attended the groups rated them positively (Table 4).

Student Evaluations of ESL Conversation Groups	Student Responses	Percentage
How effective was your conversation group leader at encouraging everyone to participate?		
Effective	617	96%
Somewhat effective	24	4%
Not effective	0	0%
Don't know	1	<1%
Overall, how would you rate your conversation group leader?		
Effective	626	98%
Somewhat effective	14	2%
Not effective	0	0%
Don't know	2	<1%

Table 4: Conversation Group Evaluations, May 14, 2012 – May 3, 2013

Although it is wonderful to see the interest in Conversation Groups, such large numbers have the disadvantage of decreasing the amount of actual speaking time given to any one individual and thus diminishing the usefulness of the program in meeting people's need for conversational practice. We attempted to remedy this for spring semester by limiting the number of attendees to six. While this number proved ideal in terms of participation, placing this limit meant that we occasionally turned people away. For the 2013-2014 academic year, I am investigating options for handling these large numbers that don't require turning people away. The problem, as for most things, is lack of resources—funded tutor hours for leading the groups, a pool of native speakers willing to join the conversations, and space for holding larger groups being the most pressing issues.

Training for Tutors Who Work with International Students

The Writing Lab hires both graduate students and undergraduate students to work with clients on their writing. The Graduate Tutors (GTAs) are masters or doctoral students in the English Department. They help clients of any level (graduate or undergraduate) with any type of document. The Undergraduate Teaching Assistants (UTAs) come from a variety of academic disciplines and are trained specifically to work with documents from the Introductory Composition program. A second group of undergraduate tutors, the Business Writing Consultants (BWCs), specializes in business and professional writing. These groups of tutors begin meeting clients in the Writing Lab with differing levels of experience working with international students (Table 5).

Experience Working with International Students in Any Capacity		
	GTAs	UTAs/BWCs
1 year ¹	0%	40%
2-5 years Purdue only	15%	33%
2-5 years Purdue & elsewhere	62%	27%
5+ years	23%	0%
UTA/BWC Non-Tutoring Experiences with International Students		
As a classmate		100%
In-class group projects		93%
Personal friendship		67%

Table 5: Tutor Experiences with International Students, May 14, 2012 – May 3, 2013

¹All GTAs have taught ENGL 106 prior to working in the Writing Lab, which almost guarantees they will have worked with international students at least 1 year prior to tutoring. UTAs/BWCs begin working in the spring semester of the academic year they are hired, so for this group, 1 year of experience most likely means 1 semester.

In order to address tutors' needs for increased knowledge of and improved skills for working with international students, the Writing Lab provides on-going training over the course of the academic year. This training takes a variety of forms, both formal and informal. On the informal end, my presence in the Writing Lab provides tutors with regular access to advice and strategies for meeting the needs of international writers. I have observed tutorials and provided feedback at the request of tutors, have provided on-the-spot information or help during tutorials at the joint request of the tutor and the client, and have met individually with tutors as they had questions or concerns related to tutoring non-native speakers.

On the formal end, there are training opportunities in place for both undergraduate and graduate tutors. Prospective undergraduate tutors must take a for-credit course (ENGL 390A or ENGL 390B) prior to applying to work in the lab. The ESL component of ENGL 390A covered two class periods, during which I addressed issues of culture as well as issues of writing and language, answered questions and responded to concerns, and introduced the students to the types of help that might be necessary when working with international students and to some strategies for addressing these issues in a 30-minute tutorial. Following their hire, UTAs and BWCs participated in the intensive ESL Training given to the entire tutoring staff of the Writing Lab during spring semester.

New graduate tutors (GTAs) are enrolled in a tutoring practicum (ENGL 502) during their first semester tutoring. At two of these meetings, the GTAs read and discussed journal articles that addressed topics related to tutoring non-native speakers, considering the relevance and applicability of the theoretical principles to actual practice in the lab. In addition to this work in the practicum, GTAs also received some training during regular staff meetings. In particular, during one meeting, Joshua Paiz, a graduate student in Second Language Studies, shared material about intercultural rhetoric, and I provided some specific strategies for working with actual texts and individuals.

In the Spring semester, I introduced a weekly, semester-long ESL training program for all tutors in the Writing Lab. Each week, tutors were assigned a one-hour individual session during which they received input (video, text, conversation, observation) and produced output (writing, conversation, creating materials/handouts) on a topic related to tutoring non-native speakers in a Writing Lab. The following topics were covered during the course of the semester:

- Cultural aspects related to assessment
- General issues of second language acquisition
- Conferencing with L2 writers
- Cultural aspects related to assignments
- The role of writing centers in helping international students
- Language needs of international writers
- Writing templates and academic writing
- Grammar and syntax
- Vocabulary
- Proofreading

For the UTAs and BWCs, the training introduced some basic information about the struggles of international students studying in a foreign culture and about the cultural aspects of writing, as well as providing some training in practical strategies for addressing concerns in tutorials. For the GTAs, the materials introduced a wider range of theoretical concerns related to successfully tutoring international students, as well as providing them with instruction and practice in a number of practical strategies and skills to be used during these interactions. The tutors'

evaluations of the training program were largely positive, with 100% of UTAs/BWCs and 92% of GTAs stating that the training had improved their ability to successfully tutor international students. The UTAs/BWCs also felt the training had a positive effect on their attitudes about working with international students, with 100% agreement. The GTA agreement on this point was lower, at 69%, most likely due to the greater previous experience with tutoring and teaching internationals that some of the GTAs possess. For instance, 31% of GTAs neither agreed nor disagreed that the training had a positive effect on attitude. A number of tutors specifically commented on the usefulness of the training:

- *I've gained useful skills and a better insight.*
- *I think it was really helpful.*
- *... in addition to my own benefits, perhaps more importantly, I believe that my clients benefited from my increased knowledge and awareness.*

The training plans for next year will look similar, with fall semester including a few whole-lab training sessions to provide some immediate strategies and information and spring semester offering the more in-depth combination of theoretical and practical materials once the tutors have gained first-hand experience with the students and their writing. My goal is to develop the spring training into an online "course" so that tutors can choose modules to complete that address their specific needs. Since the tutors are all students, we face a large amount of turnover from year to year; arranging the individual training in this manner will allow tutors to work at their own levels whether it is their first year tutoring or their fourth year.

Pilot Programs for Graduate Student Writing

This year, the Writing Lab participated in two pilot programs focused on improving graduate student writing: Graduate Writing Retreats and writing groups. In the first program, I worked with Bilsland Strategic Initiatives Fellowship recipient Laurie Pinkert on a series of Graduate Writing Retreats which provided a designated time and space for graduate students and faculty members to work on their writing projects (dissertations, journal articles, etc.) with access to Writing Lab consultants. Over the course of the academic year, we held eight retreats: four monthly retreats that included an additional 30-60 minute workshop on writing or revising strategies, and four weekly retreats without the workshop portion. The initial monthly retreat was held in November, with the remaining three in February, March, and April. The four retreats without the workshop were an extension of the original four, created when attendees of the workshop/retreat pairings commented on how valuable the writing time had been, and were held weekly during the month of April.

Although the Graduate Writing Retreats were not designated solely for international students, they were heavily populated with internationals (Table 6). Anywhere from 60 to 90 percent of

Graduate Writing Retreat Populations ¹			
	Domestic	International	Total Attendees
November 15			36
February 28	3	6	16
March 25	3	14	17
April 25	1	10	18

Table 6: Graduate Writing Retreat Populations, May 14, 2012 – May 3, 2013

¹Attendees self-identified as domestic or international during a post-session evaluation. As is typical for such evaluations, not everyone bothered to fill one out each time. We did not collect this information for the November 15 initial test of the program.

those who responded to the post-session evaluations self-identified as international students. The comments we collected via these evaluations demonstrate—by *what* is said as well as *how* it is said—that language needs were a concern for many of the attendees:

- *Help reviewing my writing to make it clear, concise, and gramatically (sic) correct*
- *Helping with my writing – specifically clarity (sic), grammatical check, and conciseness of the writing.*
- *The consultant gave line by line feedback for some portions of the chapter and helped me clarify some written ideas.*
- *Going over my writing and making it more concise and clear. Consultant recommend me ways to improve my writing.*

In addition to graduate student needs for writing help, the retreats highlighted faculty needs—for writing help of their own as well as for increased knowledge of how best to help their graduate students succeed in writing. One faculty member who attended the workshop-retreat pairings in order to progress on his own writing projects found the experience so valuable personally that he instituted a required weekly writing session for his entire lab group. Another noted the value of the retreats by saying they were “*An excellent, excellent idea. Would very much like to see more of this. In fact, as a faculty member I would mandate participation by all of my graduate students that are in the writing phase of their careers.*” Responses like these seem to indicate that faculty members have a strong desire to help their graduate students improve their writing skills but lack the knowledge of how to go about doing so. Programs such as the Graduate Writing Retreats not only help graduate students improve, as seen by the positive feedback we received from the attendees, but also enable faculty to expand their own support of their graduate students’ writing.

In general, those providing feedback found the Graduate Writing Retreats beneficial and hope they will continue to be offered in the future:

- *The 1:1 support was incredibly valuable.*
- *This should become a vital part of the Purdue graduate student experience and should be thoroughly supported by all departments and faculty on campus*
- *These retreat writing sessions are excellent! I can say that I like this idea and I'm happy to join.*
- *This has been a great project and effort. It has helped me with my writing especially in terms of accountability. . . . I would encourage other graduate students to attend this and I hope the retreats will continue to be scheduled!*
- *From my experieinces (sic) of having attended the retreat, I would defintely (sic) attend the Retreat in the future, and hence hope it continues.*
- *The writing workshop has been very helpful for me. I have gotten a lot of writing done during these retreats. The locations are conducive to productivity. I would definitely be willing to attend a summer session or regular writing workshops next year. I am also hoping to continue to attend writing retreats/ workshops regularly.*
- *Thanks for getting this going at Purdue.*
- *Writing retreat is a wonderful event. I come to the writing retreat every time. It helps me so much about my writing and keep reminding me making progress at the same time. Please do not cancel it. I learned a lot from all the tutors. All of them are great. This individual one on one tutoring helps the most. I highly recommend to keep doing it.*

The second graduate writing pilot program occurred after Professor Mike Mickelbart approached me looking for ways to help his entirely-international lab group improve their writing. With the help of Scott Partridge, a GTA in the Writing Lab, I piloted a writing group for the lab. The lab group, Scott, and I met 5 times in April and May. At each session, one student shared a brief portion of his or her writing with the group, receiving feedback from everyone present. The idea of a writing group is for the Writing Lab staff to serve as facilitators for the group, so that everyone is involved in offering feedback and suggestions for improving the piece of writing. As this program is currently still in progress, I do not yet have evaluation information to present. Anecdotally, I can report that this particular group has been appreciative of the help they receive during each writing group meeting. Also, I noted during a recent session that the members of the writing group were successful at locating all the same problem areas that Scott and I marked for discussion in a given piece of writing. In other words, although the individual writer may have been unable to locate his or her own trouble spots, when the group read and discussed a piece of writing together, they had little difficulty pointing to the areas that needed work. Although this might seem to indicate that lab groups could therefore just work on their own, a word of caution is necessary. Scott and I facilitated the discussions for several weeks before the group reached this point; therefore, asking lab groups to just immediately work on their own is not likely to help. Also, there is a great difference between spotting problem areas and knowing the best ways to correct them. For international

graduate students, the content-based or organizational lack of clarity is often compounded by lack of linguistic clarity. Access to “experts” (in content, in writing, in language) would therefore seem a necessary component of any program of writing groups started across campus.

Ideally, both of these programs for helping graduate students with their writing should be continued in the future. Overwhelmingly, the response by attendees at either the Writing Retreats or the Writing Group has been positive, with many of them indicating that they plan to continue attending as often as possible. Many graduate students find it difficult to progress on their writing because of the isolation they experience while doing so. Writing retreats and writing groups both offer interaction with fellow writers, some of whom may be experiencing the same struggles, others of whom may be able to offer suggestions for how they overcame those struggles. For international students, the availability of writing consultants who can offer brief assistance with language as well as other writing needs, is extremely valuable. Ideally, these programs should be continued; realistically, this is difficult. Although the Writing Lab employed 34 tutors during Spring Semester 2013, we still had to turn away students for appointments because of the large numbers seeking help. If tutoring staff is removed from the Lab to work at Graduate Writing Retreats or to facilitate a writing group, even more clients will need to be turned away. Rather than expanding services through the additional programs, we would merely be redistributing those services. Additional funding, perhaps for tutors dedicated to a graduate writing program, would allow both new and existing services to continue, enabling more international students and scholars access to writing help.

Campus and Community Interactions

The Writing Lab serves as a source of expert knowledge about writing for Purdue’s campus and for the wider community. Workshops on a variety of topics are held on a regular basis, and a number of Writing Across the Curriculum collaborations are in place in various departments on campus. This year, with my hire, the Writing Lab also served as a source of expert knowledge about international student writing as well. My interactions with and support for the campus and community ranged from individual consultations with faculty to small-group brown bag discussions with Writing Lab tutors and English TAs to presentations for larger groups.

Presentations & Panels:

“Best Practices & Resources for Teaching ESL Written Communication”, presented jointly with Linda Bergmann (Director of the Writing Lab), as part of CIE Series II: Expanding Your Teaching Toolkit: Best Practices, Tools & Resources for Teaching ESL Students. Feb. 14, 2013.

“Working With International Students”, panel discussion jointly with Beth Tucker, Darshini Render, Corey Linkel, and Trevor Foley, for an ODOS Staff Enrichment Event. March 12, 2013.

“English as a Second Language: Written Communication”, presented to the Lafayette Noon Optimist Club. March 13, 2013.

Campus Information-sharing:

This past year, I served as Writing Lab ESL liaison with the rest of campus. I began by updating the Writing Lab flyer aimed at international students and scholars. These flyers are widely distributed across campus and, given the numbers of international clients we have, appear to be successful in reaching their target audience. In addition, I became involved with several campus groups dedicated to improving support for international students at Purdue. We meet to discuss problems and solutions and to share knowledge.

- International Programs Campus Partners
- ESL/Communication group
- ESL sub-committee of the Introductory Writing Committee (currently conducting a needs assessment for English TAs and mentors, and Writing Lab tutors)

Individual Consultations & Collaborations

As ESL Specialist, I also spend time consulting with individuals and groups on campus about their writing-related concerns for internationals, collaborating on projects related to ESL writing, and conferring with off-campus individuals.

- History department—discussed improving international student writing in large online courses
- English department—offered solutions for the writing difficulties of a specific international student in a literature course
- Horticulture and Landscape Architecture department—created a program to improve the writing of international graduate students (writing group pilot program)
- GS course: Reading, Writing, and Speaking for International Students—explained best practices for grading second language writing
- CCO—solicited training for our conversation group leaders on the topic of jobs and interviews
- SLS graduate students—discussed research plans with individuals interested in studying topics related to international students in the Writing Lab
- ODOS—planned for a Fall 2013 implementation of citation workshops for select students with academic integrity troubles
- Assistive Technology Center—offered an assessment of their software “Read & Write Gold” for possible advertisement to international students
- OWL Content Developers—provided feedback on materials being developed specifically for international students; offered suggestions of new materials to add to the website
- OWL Mail—answered questions from around the world about ESL writing
- Visitor from Africa University—discussed resources for improving English language skills

- University of Vermont—consulted by email about issues universities need to consider if they want to increase their international enrollment
- University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill Writing Center—grant-funded site visit to learn more about running graduate workshops and writing groups
- The Language Co-op—discussed issues related to starting a language school in the community (needs assessments, advertising, etc.)