

By Our WTS

The Indiana University Writing Tutorial Services Alumni Newsletter

Writing Tutorial Services
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The State of WTS

Mid-way through her second year as WTS Director, Jo Ann Vogt reflects on the changes she's made and those still to come.

Jo Ann Vogt

As I begin my second year as director of WTS, I am much more comfortable. I have the luxury of knowing all the WTS tutors, of being able to call them by name and chat about shared experiences. On top of that, I'm more conversant with the policies and procedures that keep a big organization like WTS running smoothly from day to day. I'm less likely now to have to ask tutors to explain to me how we do things and why.

Another change this fall is a concerted effort to increase demand at our satellite locations. To bring WTS to the attention of more students, I plan to expand—with tutors' help—efforts to advertise WTS to undergraduates in the residence halls and elsewhere. Even as tutors and I work to increase traffic, I have to acknowledge that the WTS staff is smaller, in part, because

a number of long-time peer tutors graduated last spring. (We miss you!) It is also smaller because I am intent upon balancing supply and demand at WTS.

I don't want WTS tutors to be overworked, and I value the informal tutor training that often happens as tutors talk when they have a free hour as a result of a no-show or open slot. At the same time, I don't like tutoring hours to go unused. I see myself as a steward of university resources, obligated to use those resources wisely. As a result, I will continue to monitor demand at the various WTS locations, and I'll ask for feedback from tutors concerning the workload. Eventually, I hope to reach a happy medium, a point of equilibrium between the number of students who seek help and the number of tutors prepared and eager to serve those students.

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From IU to Omaha

Last May, former peer tutor Erin McGuan packed up her things and began her life as a teacher in an under-resourced school in Omaha, NE. Read on to find out how her journey has been and how she's faring so far.

Kelsey Nash

Following her graduation from IU in May 2008, former peer tutor Erin McGuan took her life in a whole new direction (and to a whole new city) to pursue her interest in teaching.

McGuan, who studied Spanish and English as an undergraduate, learned that she enjoyed teaching during her days as a WTS tutor. Today, she is a participant in the Magis Catholic Teacher Corps at Creighton University in Omaha, NE, a program she said is similar to Teach for America.

Last May, she committed to

spending two years teaching at an under-funded Catholic school in the Omaha area while simultaneously working toward obtaining a master's degree in education and earning her teaching certification through online courses.

Since she didn't study education at IU, she was given a provisional teaching license, which she will have until she finishes the requirements for her actual license.

Prior to starting her stint as a teacher this fall, she took courses in classroom management and methods

to prepare her for the upcoming year. Despite having never been in command of a classroom on her own and being the only Magis teacher in her entire school, she said she felt "pretty prepared" for the first few weeks of school.

Nineteen master's students take part in the Magis program, some of whom, like McGuan, live in Omaha. The other participants teach at schools in Nebraska, North Dakota and on a Native American reservation, she said.

She currently lives with nine other Magis participants in a convent, which she said is like "a nice, big house," and works at Assumption-Guadalupe Catholic School in downtown Omaha, where she teaches Spanish to students ranging from pre-school through eighth grade.

Ninety-eight percent of her students are Hispanic, and although they grew up speaking Spanish, she said many of them don't how to spell correctly or write professionally. She said it's difficult to get her students to keep from writing in the "Spanglish" they have learned at home.

By Our WTS is produced for the peer tutor alumni of Writing Tutorial Services, Indiana University's writing center.

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Please read, think and write back to us. Any comments on this issue or updates you wish to be included in upcoming issues may be directed to Kelsey Nash at byourwts@indiana.edu

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The Creighton University mascot, the blue jay (photo donated).

Though she enjoys teaching, she said that it's more of a challenge than she expected.

"[Teaching] is chaos," she said. "It's not what I thought I was getting into."

She teaches sixth, seventh and eighth grade students every day and pre-school through fifth grade twice a week. She also teaches art to her middle school students.

McGuan said middle school students are the hardest to work with because "they don't want to be in school, and they hate everything." But, despite the challenge of keeping them in line, she said she enjoys teaching middle school students because they have a good sense of humor and she can joke around with them.

"Middle school is the purgatory of teaching," she said.

Though she spends the majority of her time at school with middle schoolers, she said that third grade is her favorite to teach and that she's starting to enjoy the earlier grades more than she thought she would.

"Young kids soak things up. . . . They're like sponges," she said. "Preschoolers never cease to amaze me. You've got one attached to one leg, and another's hanging off your arm."

McGuan added that her work at WTS has helped her tremendously with teaching.

For example, she said she was working after school with two third graders, one of whom is a special needs student, at the beginning of November when she felt her "WTS instincts kick back in."

The ease with which she worked one-on-one with those students led her to receive a compliment or two from her principal.

She said that working at WTS has helped her learn to adapt to students' diverse learning styles and allowed her to being a flexible teacher.

Although McGuan doesn't know where she's headed after she finishes the Magis program, she said can see herself staying in Omaha and earning money for a few years before starting work on a doctorate degree.

"Omaha's a nice town," she said. "It's a mid-sized city, and the people here are very hospitable. It reminds me of Indy."



Erin McGuan (second from right) and some friends from the Magis program at the College World Series of Baseball (photo donated).

More Choices at the ASCs

Starting this semester, students can sign up for tutorials twice as long as the maximum length in previous years, but is this new policy reaping results?

Sri Chatterjee

There was a new option available to students who walked in to the ASCs this fall. They could choose between the traditional 25-minute tutorial or sign up for one that lasted 50 minutes, similar to the tutorials offered at Ballantine. The idea of adding a 50-minute tutorial option at the ASCs was put into practice at the beginning of the fall 2008 semester, and so far, it has garnered largely favorable results.

But for all of its potential benefits, many tutors might be wondering why these changes have been implemented.

"Really, there are three reasons we started the 50-minute tutorial," said Jo Ann Vogt, director of WTS, while discussing the brainstorming that went on behind the scenes of this change.

The biggest factor was the dwindling numbers at the ASCs, she said. Demand at the ASCs for spring 2008 had gone down significantly from previous semesters, and she felt this shift merited some looking into.

"I was thinking about it, and I figured that maybe the students perceived Ballantine to be better, [than the ASCs]" Vogt said.

The second reason came out of this realization. Students got more bang for their proverbial buck by going to Ballantine, where tutors had longer amounts of time to work with students and more resources available to them (the only inconvenience with Ballantine being the need to make an appointment ahead of time). Students seemed to have figured this out, and their behavior indicated that they likely preferred coming to Ballantine.

The third reason came out of Vogt's analysis of the pitch she was using during her classroom visits. She constantly found herself saying that students had to either put in a lot of work to be able to understand exactly what they wanted out of the 25 minutes at the ASCs or have something really short to work on. The odds were that students wouldn't be able to get through a four-page paper in 25 minutes at the ASCs.

Having to mention all this in her pitch, Vogt found herself playing Ballantine up as the preferable option.

"I was undercutting my own pitch!" she said.

The change was discussed, developed and implemented over the

summer so it would be in place before school began in September.

"I would have liked to talk to all the tutors about this option before starting with it, but that would have made it very difficult for everyone else, as it needed to be in place before the start of fall 2008," Vogt said.

Mid-way through the fall semester, most tutors said they liked having the option of a longer, more relaxed tutorial, and they thought it benefits both them and the students. There is also the chance of a longer tutorial running shorter than 50 minutes, which gives tutors some respite on very busy nights.

The biggest concern, however, was the fact that the decision between the 30- and 50-minute tutorial was left up to the students. A common problem tutors expressed was that sometimes students with two-page papers would sign up for an hour simply because it was available, thus causing people with longer or more complex papers to be turned away.

Overall, this new option seems to be a hit with both the students and the tutors. And judging by the busy nights tutors have been having at the ASCs, it is having its intended effect.

WTS Crosses Continents

A peer tutor reflects on her semester abroad in England

Jane Barr

As I stumbled into London's murky daylight with my overweight suitcase in tow, my reassuring mantra, "four thousand miles isn't so far," sounded hollow on my lips.

After the benefit of over two months of hindsight, I can now barely remember why my first glimpse of this enormous city generated such genuine nervousness. I have since discovered that the reasons for my study-abroad apprehension and adoration are one in the same: London is all encompassing, enormous, bustling, beautiful, diverse and populous. On top of that, it is the home of that enigmatic and alluring creature that I have most come to adore: the Londoner.

The title of the Londoner is not exclusive. Since few people live in London all of their lives, the definition of a Londoner means anyone who wishes to try their luck in the city of more than seven million people. People of all ethnicities, religions, sizes, incomes, personalities and educations inhabit and become perfectly attuned to the city.

If I take nothing else away from my time there, I will always remember London as a city of dichotomy. While walking to the tube station everyday, I pass St. Luke's Church, where Charles Dickens' somewhat ill-fated marriage began; a few blocks later, I pass a Starbucks. Who would have thought that the centuries could co-exist beside one another so seamlessly

without causing a tear in the fabric of the space-time continuum? All the characteristics of the old and the new only add to the charm of one of the most historically important cities on the globe.

This combination of old and new worlds is only a small example of the scope of diversity that makes London wonderful. On any Sunday afternoon, you can take a trip to Camden Town to visit the markets. In this indie-rock Mecca, you will be met with more hair dye, tattoos, piercing, Mohawks, leather trousers and platform boots than you could ever imagine and see a number of unique shops and markets lining the street. Less than thirty minutes away, you can find yourself strolling down Sloane Street, home of Gucci, Louis Vuitton, and a host of London's most posh shopping stops.

As I approach the final weeks of my time abroad, my relief and joy at the pending reunion with family and friends have somewhat of a bitter taste. I will regret leaving the constant bustle of city life. I will miss the snippets of daily conversation overheard on the tube as everyone simultaneously tries their hardest to avoid eye contact. I will miss the continual benefits of being an English major living in a city where many important pieces of literature are set.

But most of all, I will miss the sense of endless possibility that permeates this enormous city, attracting all those who would become a "Londoner."



Canterbury Cathedral, which was built in 602 AD, in Canterbury, Kent (photo donated).

Getting to Know You

Writing tutors spend several nights a week working with a host of other tutors, receptionists and advisors, but somehow, we know very little about our fellow ASC employees. Here, we've provided a handy crash course.

Callie Taylor and Brandon Haffner

All of the writing tutors work in the Academic Support Centers at some point during the week. We arrive, go to our little rooms and sit on reclining chairs at our tutors-only computers as we wait for eager students to arrive.

But a lot of other people work in the ASCs. We work with all of them, not just the other writing tutors and tutees; the receptionists' and math tutors' jobs impact ours. And yet it seems that each group has their own bubble. Writing tutors rarely talk to math tutors, even when neither are working with a tutee. So who

are these people we work with every night? This article gives the take of Leslie Robinson, ASC director, on student roles in the ASCs.

First, let's talk about the receptionists. They serve as "traffic directors," directing students to the correct rooms and making sure that all ASC policies are followed. They take care of sign-up sheets so that our lives are a little more relaxed; they also take the brunt of student complaints about how there are never enough time slots.

Heather Wood, a receptionist at Teter, says this latter part of the job

is her least favorite because it's rather difficult to tell people that there are no remaining time slots when they come to sign up for one.

"I really do not like dealing with people when all the tutoring slots are full," Wood says. "People get really angry when they can't be tutored, and they take it out on me, even though it is their own fault for not coming early enough."

The receptionists also make sure students don't "just sit in the room" to do their math homework, which would completely overwhelm the math tutors.

Receptionists are also expected to answer questions about the academic help services on all of campus, not just in the ASCs (e.g. language tutors and help for students in certain schools or organizations). They are usually undergraduates who live in the dorms. Robinson prefers to hire people who are underclassmen for this position because it is a convenient job for them and helps them learn about all the available student resources early in their college careers.

The math tutors, as expected, help students with math homework. They work mostly with students taking introductory level math courses, but



Receptionist Kaleigh Breuckman is hard at work in Forest's Academic Support Center.

there is always at least one tutor in each ASC who can help with upper-level courses. There are usually four or five math tutors in each ASC at any given time, and Robinson tries to mix graduate and undergraduate staff when possible. Instead of having the easy one-to-one ratio that writing tutors expect, math tutors usually work with five students at a time.

Regardless, math tutors still deal with some of the same problems we do. They see the occasional student who comes in every night looking for someone to do their work for them and often tutor students whose problems stem from a student-teacher conflict instead of the material itself.

The third group of students working in the ASCs is one Robinson refers to as being "professional, well-trained and pleasant to work with." She is talking about the writing tutors, of course. She compliments our ability to adapt to this year's changes in the ASCs, specifically the hour-long tutorial option. Robinson tries to let each group of tutors work out its own system of operations. So far, this has worked well, though there is a rare personality conflict between a writing tutor and someone else in the ASCs.

Wood, the receptionist, hasn't seen any such conflict, however.

"The writing tutors come talk to me when they aren't busy," she says. "I like having someone to talk to sometimes."

Keeping people company is a key part of what us writing tutors do at the ASCs.

Students who visit Teter are more "mellow" than others, despite the fact that writing tutors have the most tutorials at Teter and are more likely to see an ESL or graduate student. Students who go to Briscoe for help are more "frantic" and more likely to be freshmen, while students who visit Forest are a "late-night crowd," filling the after-9pm time slots more often

than the first two hours each night. Tutors at Forest also see a wider range of courses and class levels than tutors at the other ASCs.

So there's a look outside our own bubble, a larger view of how the receptionists, math tutors, writing tutors and students make up the microcosms that are the ASCs.



Tutor Kelsey Nash works with a student in Forest's ASC (photo by Caitlin Zittkowski).

And last, but certainly not least, there are the students who come in for tutorials. WTS sees 15 to 20 percent of the freshman class at some point during the year, according to Robinson, with freshmen and sophomores taking the majority of ASC tutorials. Minority and ESL students usually make up a larger percentage of our tutees than they do a percentage of their entire university class. And Robinson confirms what we've all noticed: the students in each ASC have a different group personality.

One thing that unifies us all, to be sure, is the candy bowl in each ASC office. Robinson personally makes sure the tutors have a bucket full of treats nearly every week, and math tutors, receptionists, and writing tutors alike all take advantage of it. Even Wood has something to say about the candy bowl.

"Out of the things that have been in the bucket, my favorite candy is Starbursts," she says. "But I really love plain m&ms."

Beaches, Bays and B-town

After graduating from IU, two WTS alums took jobs on the West Coast but found themselves back in Bloomington only a few years later.

Brandon Haffner

While most of our WTS alumni leave town and never come back, some just can't stay away from good, old Bloomington. We caught up with two of those who were unable to resist the charming feeling of home in our Indiana University town, Ben Motz and Bill Trovinger, and we found out what they've been up to.

Motz left Bloomington in 2003 for the University of California-San Diego in La Jolla, Calif., to attend graduate school in cognitive science. After getting his master's degree, he went into business analytics consulting and took a job in Los Angeles. He consulted with several companies, from DIRECTV to Toyota to Sears.

"Around this time, I got married to Nicole, also an IU alum," Motz said about his time in California. "[She] joined me on this west coast foray."

But as Motz continued to climb the corporate ladder, he realized the fast pace and constant demands of the business world weren't for him.

"I realized I preferred the slower pace of life," he said. "I wanted to focus more attention on my young family and less on the pressures of quarterly reports and market research."

Motz then accepted at a job at IU in the same department that had awarded him his bachelor's degree, the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences. He moved back with his wife and is now a lecturer.

"[I'm] teaching P101 [Introductory Psychology] this fall and P335 [Cognitive Psychology] and P155 [Intro to Psychology and Brain

Sciences] in the spring," Motz said.

Of course, the change back to Bloomington wasn't 100 percent how he'd imagined it.

"I got my first taste that Bloomington was different when I registered to vote in Indiana," he said. "Tortilla Flats is no longer in existence and is now Barack Obama's Bloomington headquarters. I felt



Ben Motz and his wife, Nicole, at McCormick's Creek State Park (photo donated).

surprisingly old (and I'm only 28!) when Obama's volunteer told me that they'd never heard of Taco Tuesday!"

Taco Tuesday or no Taco Tuesday, Motz is still happy to be back in town.

"I'm glad to find that patrons still gather round the TVs at Bear's Place every Sunday evening to watch the Simpsons," he said. "And that Anita Schaad is still keeping WTS running in Ballantine."

Another young businessman who couldn't stay away from Bloomington, William Trovinger, also moved to California after he graduated.

"I graduated from IU and the Kelley School of Business in 2004 and uprooted my Midwest life by moving to the San Francisco Bay area to start a career as a business analyst," Trovinger said.

He certainly took advantage of the California life while he was there, it seems.

"Over the next four years, I enjoyed everything California had to offer from skiing in Tahoe to wine tasting in Napa to scenic drives down the Pacific Coast Highway," he said.

Yet somehow the luster of the California lifestyle wore off quickly for Trovinger. By 2008, he'd come to realize that California was not where he belonged.

"Even with its great weather, plethora of outdoor activities and nightlife and an enjoyable job, California was never 'home,'" he said.

Thus, Trovinger decided to move back to Bloomington to attend graduate school. He returned to IU to pursue an MBA in consumer marketing and corporate innovation.

Six months after he left San Francisco, the company he worked

He, like Motz, noticed some changes with the town.

"Bloomington has certainly changed since I was last a student here, especially since the majority of my time is now spent in the palatial graduate business building," he said. "But the overall sense of community, education and friendliness has remained the same."

Trovinger also hasn't forgotten his WTS roots.

"Not only did I return to Indiana and the Kelley School of Business but also Writing Tutorial Services," he said.

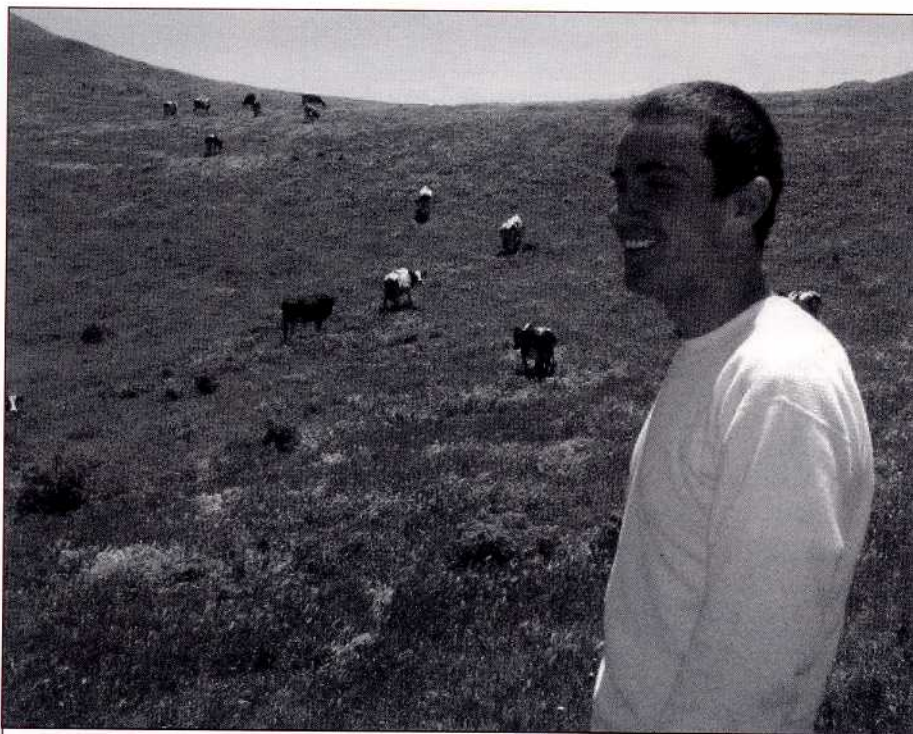
He left with a parting note that reminds us of what's truly important in life:

"According to the plaque in the bullpen at WTS Ballantine, I was the original Top Dog back in 2002," he said. "So, yeah. . . I'm kind

of a big deal around here."

Despite climbing corporate ladders and living it up California style, Motz and Trovinger found a way to make it back to Bloomington. And better still, they seem as happy as ever.

We at WTS wish them luck with their future endeavors, here in Bloomington or elsewhere.



Bill Trovinger poses with some cows at Point Reyes in CA (photo donated).

for, Mervyns, declared bankruptcy and shut down operations.

"People always seem puzzled when I tell them Bloomington is way better than San Francisco, so that might just be me, but I 100 percent believe that," Trovinger said. "Being back in Bloomington is amazing, as I only now realize how much of undergrad I took for granted by not valuing all this city has to offer."

What's New with WTS Alums

In which we take some time to catch up on the lives of old friends

I just signed a contract with Praeger Publishers to publish my forthcoming book, *The Gangsta's God: The Politics of Respectability in Hip Hop*.

-Ebony Utley

I left the PR firm I was working for and am now the Interim Publications Editor at the Washington National Opera.

-Martha Hunt

I am still living near Washington, DC and am enjoying all this area has to offer. However, after more than 2 years at Corporate Executive Board, I have taken on a new position at Booz Allen Hamilton consulting company as a Recruiting Consultant in their McLean, VA office. I also have begun freelancing for *Beverage Journal Magazine* (Washington, DC/Maryland edition), where I am a monthly columnist. When I am not recruiting or flexing my writing muscle, I am a weekly volunteer for Streetwise Partners organization, which involves mentoring a young adult navigating the job market.

-Lauren Belles

I'm living in Cambridge City, IN and working as a graphic designer at the *Palladium-Item* newspaper. In my spare time, I catch up on my reading.

-Kehla West

Not much has changed since I graduated other than that I feel old now. I'm currently at IPFW taking some English classes to get into the Transition to Teaching Program next year. I'm also a certified substitute teacher for FWCS 3 days a week. Other than that, I bought a house! It was a foreclosure, so my boyfriend and I are doing quite a bit of fix-up work. It's not much, but we're updating the time machine (EVERYTHING is straight from 1970). I also just got a baby kitten (who is staring at my hands typing this). Her name is Hester Prynne because she's grey like Hester's eyes in the movie of *The Scarlet Letter* and her mom is always pregnant. She's crazy, but I'm pretty sure I'm turning into a crazy cat lady. . . . I pretty much treat her like a child.

-Jo Minnich

I am currently in my second year of Ph.D studies at the University of Cambridge in England.

-Garth Stahl

My husband, Nick, and I welcomed a beautiful baby girl, named Audrey Kate Colby, on November 3, 2008. Everyone is doing great, and we have been blessed with a sweet, healthy baby.

-Kelly McShane Colby

I currently live, work and play in Omaha, NE. I moved out here in May 2008 to start my graduate school classes in education. I am in a program at Creighton University called the Magis Catholic Teacher Corps. I commit to two years of teaching in an under-resourced Catholic school while taking Masters degree classes and living in a community of 10 people (in a convent!). I work at Assumption-Guadalupe Catholic teaching Spanish to a population of native Hispanic Spanish speakers. It makes sense, some days. Omaha is great, not too big but not too small.

-Erin McGuan

I got married in June in Fort Wayne. I'm working here at IU for the Office of Student Financial Assistance, where I oversee the Verification Program as an accounting assistant. Also, my wife Helen and I are expecting! The baby is due March 25, 2009. We're both excited to be starting our family, and we're enjoying post-graduation Bloomington.

-Joe Roy

Our WTS Alumni Directory

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Over the years, we've lost touch with many of our friends from WTS as jobs have changed and moves have been made. If you know the address of an alum who's moved, please e-mail byourwts@indiana.edu.



Jo Minnich with her boyfriend, Calvin, and cat, Hester Prynne, in Fort Wayne (photo donated).

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