

BY OUR WTS

The Indiana University Writing Tutorial Services Alumni Newsletter

Writing Tutorial Services
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN 47405

New Look, Same WTS

CWP Director Laura Plummer discusses the electronic evolution of By Our WTS and the state of the program

Laura Plummer

Perhaps the first thing you'll notice about this issue of By Our WTS is its electronic form. While cost is a factor—and I'll get to that in a moment—we also hope this format eases a few other difficulties. We find that while you all move around geographically quite a bit, particularly right after graduation from college, you maintain Internet presences that are consistent and stable. We're confident, then, that we will have fewer BOW issues bounced back to us now that we're sending it out via the Internet.

Having said that, thank you all for keeping in touch, updating your contact information with the Editor, and responding to this bi-annual missive. It's nice to know we're not shipping this thing out into the void. You'll note that WTS has a presence on Facebook now (as do I); please join our merry e-band.

"But what about the money?" you ask. While we have undergone some administrative reorganization



Laura Plummer

above us, the Writing Program and WTS remain much as you left them. Our budgets have been pinched a bit, however. The whole university has less funding this year, and while we hope that the reduced support from the state is a temporary situation,

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Tutor assisting a student at Ballantine location.

the reality for the time being is that we have fewer hard dollars in hand. Consequently, the printing and mailing costs of BOW have become unappealingly expensive. To put this notion in perspective: we can print and mail BOW twice, or hire two undergraduate tutors for the entire year. Our choice probably seems clear.

Such a choice is easy, too, when one thinks about a stack of paper in comparison to the opportunities

WTS offers peer tutors. Believe me, I love the whole process of producing print documents, but I'd rather have more chatter at the ASCs or in the WTS bullpen.

In keeping with that sentiment, this year's new crowd of peer tutors is large—fourteen!—and Jo Ann Vogt is, as I type, observing their first string of tutorials at WTS. I'm sure all of you remember that experience: sitting down to the table alone for

the first time, wondering whether or not you'll choke once confronted with an actual writer with her actual paper. No one ever chokes. For the most part, I think those first sessions work out far better than anyone anticipates. While it seems that one of the newbies had to contend with a student in tears (prompted by something wholly unrelated to writing or the tutorial), it's been smooth from all reports.

My hope is that none of you are brought to tears by work or school, and that you continue to flourish. To those of you who are teaching: good luck with this last slide toward the close of the term. To everyone: We miss you! Keep in touch!

Over the years, we've lost contact with many of our friends from WTS as jobs have changed and moves have been made. If you know of a former tutor who's fallen out of touch, please forward this newsletter and have the alum email us at byourwts@indiana.edu.

Thanks!

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 Shabrelle Pollock at byourwts@indiana.edu

Meet the Sheriffs

The "wranglers" discuss their jobs, including the perks and obligations

Amanda Mast

Running and maintaining the multiple locations of the writing center can be a challenge. After all, there are sites in Ballantine, the Wells Library, the School of Education, and ASC locations in three of the dorms. Each year, two undergraduate tutors are hired as "wranglers" to help ease the stress and oversee the ASC's.

This year, the wranglers are seniors Sri Chatterjee and Chris Frisz. Chatterjee is a finance and marketing major, and Frisz is majoring in computer science.

"Essentially, wranglers are responsible for the smooth running of the ASC's," Sri explains. Wranglers help with any possible problems that could arise at the ASC's.

"I try to make sure that all peer tutors are happy," Chatterjee said. "[I try to] have all their questions answered, and [make sure they] aren't being eaten alive."

As wranglers, Frisz and Chatterjee must also help out WTS director Jo Ann Vogt whenever needed.

"I think Jo Ann told Sri and me at our first meeting that our role was to take care of the things that she can't get done because there aren't 36 hours in the day," Frisz said.

He and Chatterjee are there to handle WTS-related problems that Vogt might not have the time to address. Additionally, wranglers are in charge of scheduling the undergraduate tutors at the beginning of each semester.

Aside from the more typical work that must be done, there

is a fun side to the work as well. Chatterjee mentioned being in charge of selecting which pizzas to order for the peer tutor working group meetings.

"I get to make sure there's enough for a resounding 'yum,'" she said. She explained that the task is actually more interesting than one might imagine.

"Having the power to decide what people get to eat on the university's per diem? A-MAZING."

Though both Chris and Sri state that Wrangling doesn't take up much additional time in their week, they are essentially "on-call" five days a week from 7-11pm. They must be readily available for any sort of problem at all of the ASC locations.

Chatterjee and Frisz both enjoy their positions as wranglers, though they differ in what they

consider most rewarding. Chatterjee likes getting to see all of the tutors, and Frisz enjoys "the responsibility of managing the undergraduate tutors."

When asked jokingly if they wore Wranglers (and if so, blue or black?), Frisz and Chatterjee happily responded.

"I used to wear Wranglers until high school! Does that count?," Frisz said laughing. "Then I upgraded to big-boy Arizona Jean Co. jeans."

Chatterjee chimed in as well.

"I don't, though it's definitely an interesting idea. Considering Chris and I keep wearing blue on the same day, I'm going to say we would've gone with blue. Though I wouldn't be able to get any work done on account of the cowboy boots and hat I would have to pair my wranglers with. Just me?"



Sri Chatterjee and Chris Frisz discuss ASC schedules.

Studying WTS

Peer tutor takes on the task of reviewing the culture of WTS

Melissa Georgiou

A bit of backstory: I have been covertly observing the tutors. Yes, you. And you. Well, maybe not you.

I am currently enrolled in an undergraduate Communications and Culture course which attempts to analyze culture through ethnographic means, like participant observation and reflexive writing. Our major class assignment is to conduct our own “mini-ethnography” looking at how a cultural group has formed on campus. Our teacher encouraged us to pick a group we were a part of...

So, I picked Writing Tutorial Services.

The results of my cursory studies have been interesting and are (by no means) conclusive. I have discovered how to apply the knowledge from course readings from ethnographers like Geertz, Bucholtz and Kiesling (and many other people you may or may not have heard of). Significantly, analysis led to an understanding of myself and how I fit into this community. My opportunity to write reflexively about my experiences at WTS will hopefully encourage you to consider how much the people and groups with whom you choose to hang out or “acculturate” will change you.

While I previously expected this community to be centered on the knowledge of language, I’ve found another binding similarity

which connects the tutors together as a group. Considering my recent promotion to “Wrangler”, I questioned what allows a member of the WTS community to be successful and attain status and belonging. What I discovered was that the Writing Tutorial Service tutors’ cultural group is defined by their understanding of experience as a form of capital to acquire power and authority; this understanding of the function of experience is a reflection of how Writing Tutorial Services works as a business.

Capital? Like money, WTS tutors exchange experience for power. Part of this is a reflection of the WTS business model. After all, tutors who are perceived to have more experience are paid more. The annual peer tutor roundtable is a fantastic example of the non-monetary value placed on experience. The “round table” is physically arranged to encourage the separation of the less experienced, so that they may pose questions to the more experienced and attain more capital and therefore, more power. Similar to ethnographer Mary Bucholtz’s ideas about “capital” in a community of self-proclaimed nerds, WTS tutors seem to observe experience as a form of capital between them in order to form together as a social group. (I’m not suggesting they are or could be defined as “nerds, but it’s quite

possible.)

Furthermore, it’s not only work experience that is valued; questions asked by the “baby tuts” to the peer and graduate tutors were largely asking for stories of a typically humorous nature. Questions like, “Have you ever had a haunting tutorial?” and “What was your most satisfying tutorial?” prompted lengthy stories and conversations about similar experiences between tutors of all different levels. Experience is one of the tools used to connect tutor to tutor. My notes on the roundtable discussion, between the practicum students, undergraduate and grad students, proves that the existence of such an event (involving food, drink and lively discussion) reinforces the idea that the WTS higher-ups wish the tutors to “acculturate”, as the director Jo Ann Vogt mentioned during the meeting. This value placed on experience makes sense because WTS is, after all, a business. If the goals of WTS are to provide experienced peer and graduate tutors to the student populace, the tutors’ behaviors are going to reflect the wishes of those higher up in the hierarchy.

Therefore, hiring practices seek to find students from a multitude of disciplines and most of the workers are graduate students, who are perceived as more experienced. Clifford Geertz’s article



Tutors at annual Jamboree.

“Blurred Genres: Reconfiguration of Social Thought”, posits that “...the world of the gods... is at the same time a template for that of men” (66). WTS tutors do not, obviously, view their work as religious in any manner; however, the quotation points to the relationship of one higher in the hierarchy setting a model for the one who is lower. Most businesses and institutions model their organizations in this manner. The activity for the practicum I observed was to watch a video recording of a more experienced tutor tutoring a student. While the tutees were expected to criticize their observation and see what tutoring techniques they could learn from the video tutor’s lesson, I also wonder if the choice in activity might be an influence of the expected value of knowledge and experience by

Jo Ann Vogt. In other words, WTS values experience and demonstrates it by lots of peer teaching, even for the tutors.

I don’t mean to suggest all of the tutors are one hundred percent molded by the WTS “gods” to fit this job description. Most would find that to be “creepy.” Instead, individual tutors share common characteristics with one another which allow them to not only be effective tutors, but accepted members of the WTS community. I observed in my first field notes that the practicum students often performed quiet study skills without prompting. This demonstrates a common appreciation for academia and academic culture. Furthermore, the school setting may have reinforced these ideas. Power and experience and their

place in the WTS tutorial cultural group are made evident in other ways including word choice from the WTS tutors. Emphasis placed upon “interactions,” “personal,” “ideas” and of course, “experience” when answering questions about WTS and other tutors insinuates that these concepts resonate in the tutors’ understanding of their work. Something as mundane as furniture arrangement even suggests how WTS directors and tutors can manipulate power and perceptions of power within WTS. The roundtable opened the room for discussion of shared experiences, but the tables we work at during a normal tutorial in Ballantine certainly add a different atmosphere.

These observations really
(continued on page 7)

Fantastic Five

Senior peer tutors reflect on their time at WTS as they prepare to graduate

Hometown:
La Porte, IN

Major/Minor: English major, Germanic Studies, Comparative Literature, and History minors

Years tutoring? 2 years (minus semester abroad and plus semester of training....)

Plans after graduation? Pursuing a career in publishing. I hope to be an editor. Also, graduate school in the near future, possibly.

How will your experience with WTS help you in the future? WTS has helped me to be a better critical reader of texts. It's also helped me be a better communicator.



Elana Kelber

Hometown:
Chesterton, IN

Major/Minor: Spanish and Lamp/Russian, Russian and Eastern European Studies, Political Science

Years tutoring? 2

Plans after graduation? I will be working for the Spanish government as a language and cultural assistant, teaching English in Seville.

How will your experience with WTS help you in the future? My experience at WTS has taught me to be patient and listen. These skills are important in friendships, relationships, and work, and especially important in a teaching situation. Work at WTS has helped me to understand how beneficial it is to focus on an exchange between parties.



Nicole Horvath

Hometown: Scottsburg, Indiana

Major/Minor: Computer Science, B.S. with minors in Biology and Mathematics

Years tutoring? 3

Plans after graduation? Get my PhD in computer science researching compilers and programming languages at University of Michigan.

How will your experience with WTS help you in the future? An important part of research is communicating it with others. Many people in my field don't have the skills to do that effectively, but working at WTS has helped me hone those skills.



Chris Frisz

Hometown: Minneapolis, MN

Major/Minor: Psychology and LAMP/Marketing

Years tutoring? 2 years

Plans after graduation? Backpacking Europe for 6 weeks, and then moving to Chicago to start as a Business Analyst in Strategy and Operations for Deloitte consulting

How will your experience with WTS help you in the future? Definitely helps with listening skills and figuring out how to most efficiently and effectively help someone. Outside of WTS, these skills help attack any task by ferreting out the most crucial aspects of the situation and what needs to be done



Jane Barr

Hometown: Guilford, IN

Major/Minor: English

Years tutoring? One

How will your experience with WTS help you in the future?

I do not yet know what my future holds, but it will likely involve teaching. If it does, then my time at WTS has certainly helped me. I have learned how to work with fellow students on their writing, and I have learned quite a bit about the sorts of barriers many students consistently face. As I look back on the tutoring I have done over the course of my year here I find a modest but very satisfying thread of memories, a collection of instances in which I do feel that I not only made a paper better, but also made a student into a better writer and- in the process- relieved some of their anxiety and torture. I've also learned the very real satisfaction one can derive from helping people to acquire or hone a worthwhile skill- it's a good feeling.

Even if my future does not involve teaching or writing or human interaction (perhaps I will live alone in the mountains, shooting wild beasts and drinking wine and filling the stars with my lusty, echoing song nightly), I have at the very least met and connected with some truly remarkable people in my time at WTS- people who have, beyond their knowing, helped me through a grim time with their conversation and companionship.



Doug Foster

Studying WTS

(cont'd from p. 5)

only scratch at the surface of what could be possible if I were to spend every day noticing every tiny detail and suggesting how each action is an indicator of the unconscious desire to belong to our community. Personally, I warn you to take any analysis with an extra large grain of salt. Through the method of participant observation, I have been able to grasp some beginner's understanding of how the Campus Writing Program trains tutors toward their business and might be using different community building techniques both knowingly and unknowingly. Perhaps an awareness of our own small web of culture will allow us to advance our methods and become more effective tutors.

Regardless, my time spent spying on others has reminded me that people watching will always be an interesting way of spending an afternoon. Now, I have the tools to make something of the practice.

Follow that old lady!

WTSer spends Spring Break 2010 in Tokyo, Japan

Shabrelle Pollock

After about 15 minutes of wandering down a narrow side street in Nikko, I realized we were lost. How this happened, I wasn't quite sure, but I was sure that the cute gates we thought were entrances to temples were really just entrances to houses. In short: we were probably trespassing on private property which is pretty much illegal worldwide.

It was road maps, language barriers and cultural immersion. It was Spring Break 2010.

The trip was my first outside of the country. Selected as one of 16 students to be a part of the Indiana University School of Journalism International Public Relations course, I was given the chance to travel to Tokyo as real-world exposure to the topics studied in class. The course, lead by Professor Jim Bright, focuses on PR on an international scale, specifically in the East Asian countries where the field is making great strides.

In our class, we recognize that the world our generation will live and work in will be a global one. For this reason, it is of the utmost importance that we develop some knowledge of cultures beyond our nation's borders.

It was this quest for cultural understanding— or “misunderstanding” as the case would be— that led my classmates and me off the main road and down a dead end street. And so, like any respectable tourists in a foreign land, we began to take pictures of the



Shabrelle Pollock (right) with a friend in Shibuya.

fascinating things around us such as trees and blades of grass. Facebook album title: “See this rock? It's from Japan!”

I was the one hear the voice first. As the elderly woman emerged from the gate to her yard, she began to ask several questions in Japanese that I could neither answer nor comprehend. The others gathered around to watch in equal confusion. And so it went:
Little old lady: Something in Japanese.

Me: “My class is here in Nikko.”

Little old lady: Something else in Japanese.

Me (voice slightly raised as if it would help with translation): “Shrines? Nikko

shrines?”

Little old lady: Mumbles something else in Japanese that sounds suspiciously like “gaijin.”

Someone else: “What do you think she's saying?”

Me: “Now, how am I supposed to know?”

Instead of turning us in for trespassing, she showed us an alley that met back up with the main road taking us directly to the Nikko National Park. Despite being incapable of talking to her before, we were all able to tell her “Arigato!” while bowing awkwardly before we continued to our destination.

Professor Bright always says that the most important word in “public relations” is “relations,” and I

believe this idea speaks a great deal to our overall experience on the trip. While in Japan, we built relationships both of the professional and personal variety.

During the week, we visited several businesses and met with different professionals, learning about their experiences working in Japan. The stops included a tour through the Nissan Oppama Plant and Headquarters, dinner at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan, a visit to Kreab Gavin Anderson and an afternoon at the U.S. Embassy. Each presentation and conversation expanded our knowledge as future professionals. They also helped us construct a better idea of why PR was sometimes practiced differently in Japan than in the States.

For people not in tune with the reality that different cultures have different values, it is all too easy to see things they don't understand as silly or, even worse, wrong. The current saga of the Toyota crisis is a prime example of this. As we discussed in class and were reminded during our time there, Japan is behind the U.S. in using transparency in PR, which directly relates to its big companies practicing secrecy and turning inward to alleviate problems. This has led to severe damage for some of them, an unfortunate repercussion for their cultural norm.

This doesn't mean that change and understanding aren't going to come. I think Brian Fowler, managing editor of Bloomberg, gave the most insight when he explained how the structure of his company was one that worked worldwide. As an example of how we are moving towards a more global society, Bloomberg's offices bring in



Asakusa, home to Senso-ji, a famous Buddhist temple.

international thought processes and tailor them to the specific country. As we learned in class, Japan and East Asia are looking to us for their cues in the PR field; that doesn't mean that we should ignore their culture as we work together.

Being that we were a class of 20-sometings, meeting with students our own age was quite possibly the best example of how our world is changing. It was reassuring to interact with them and see that they too understood, respected and embraced the differences between our cultures; as our future “colleagues,” they were prepared— as we were— for a more globalized society.

Our final night there, a group of us ventured out to the infamous Harajuku, a definite splash in Japanese youth culture. Before we returned to the hotel, we were able to have a brief conversation with a group of Japanese students— each one dressed to kill. As we had come

to understand, Japanese youth culture was very fashion based. While they may not have been outfits we could pull off back in the states, you had to appreciate them for being so fashion forward. With our combined broken English and Japanese, we managed a conversation and closed it with a souvenir photo-op. Before we boarded the train for the evening, we said our goodbyes as best we could.

Me: “It was really nice meeting you guys!”

Girl: “It was nice to be meeting you too!”

Me: “Arigato!”

(a brief pause for minor language issue)

Me: By the way, your outfit is... kawaii!”

Girl: Laughing. “Thank you!”

While this short little meeting may not have seemed like much, it was actually what our trip was all about, gaining cultural understanding white simultaneously building relationships.

You can do what?!

Fun facts about fellow tutors and WTS staff

Sri Chatterjee

Jane Barr

Jane has a long history of getting the cops called on her for ridiculous, and therefore hilarious, reasons. Once, she was playing Catchphrase, and got so into the game that her neighbors called the cops because they thought a violent fight was going on.

Sarah Dees

Star sightings are always an exciting event. People stake out for hours to get to see stars. Sarah has an interesting reversal to this trend. She once had Harrison Ford watch her, doing homework! At a hotel in Hawaii, Sarah was busy finishing up some work in the hotel lobby when Indiana Jones himself walked up and sat down opposite her.

Karen Dillon

Karen can recite, from memory, two full 1980's Jimmy Dean's Sandwich commercials. Ask her to demonstrate, it's a showstopper!



Peer tutors celebrating WTS Director Jo Ann Vogt's birthday.

Deborah Strickland

Here's a fun game - two truths and a lie. Can you guess which ones of these three facts about Deborah is a lie?

- She holds dual citizenship, American and English.

- She was born in Saudi Arabia.

- She is actually a bunny.

Jo Ann Vogt

JoNan the Grammarian once owned an opossum and currently drives a Smart Car. While she was in the movie *Fahrenheit 911*, the most interesting fun fact about her is that the two topics she knows most about are serial killers and traditional country music.

Our WTS Alumni Directory

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On any given night...

What happens between tutorials, stays between tutorials



Tutors having a little fun in their downtime.



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