

# By Our WTS

Issue 7.1, Dec. 2012



THE IU WRITING TUTORIAL SERVICES ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

## The WTS Fund

BY LAURA PLUMMER

I'd like to introduce—or re-introduce, in some cases—a few wonderfully special WTS alumni: Katie Levin, a graduate tutor who also trained the 2006 group of peer tutors; Garth Stahl, who served as both a peer and a graduate tutor; Bill Trovinger who was one of our first wranglers; Jen Woodall Johnston, who created By Our WTS; Katie Beyer Zarich and Jon Zarich, now-spouses who were brave enough to work together; Allison Mikkalo, and Alison Lefkowitz, who were among our first tutors of the new millennium; Sarah Murphy who is our most adoring WTS client; and Kyle Springman, who with Bill started a long line of peer tutors from the Kelley School of Business.

Why have I singled out these tutors in particular? Because they are the founding contributors to our CITL Writing Program/Writing Tutorial Services Fund.

They were generous enough, and thought highly enough of WTS, to pick up their proverbial checkbooks. With their financial support, WTS is now positioned to provide programs and make purchases that fall outside our

## FUNDS

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## Common questions

*At WTS different academic backgrounds are assets*

BY KATIE BEASLEY

In my past two years at Writing Tutorial Services, I've noticed something interesting in my tutorials, particularly with students working on English W131 Elementary Composition assignments.

Many students assume that I, as someone who has been deemed worthy of advising them on their Microthemes, am an enthusiastic and dedicated English major.

The truth is that although I have explored many academic paths while at IU, English has never been one of them.

In fact, the most I have delved into the written word in any of my courses was when I was required to take a technical writing course as part of my public and nonprofit management degree.

While WTS tutors come in studying a variety of academic disciplines, a couple things tie them together, including an aptitude for language and the ability to put ideas together creatively.

According to the 2012-2013 tutor roster out of the 40 undergraduate and graduate tutors that make

up the tutoring staff, 14 list English as their primary field of study.

Many of these tutors also have double majors in outside fields.

Three students are pursuing degrees through the Kelley School of Business or the School of Public and Environmental Affairs, three in the Jacobs School of Music, and three study-

ing biology.

Other tutors are in fields like journalism, sociology, library science, and gender studies.

"As a biology major, I feel like I'm able to identify with students who aren't used to doing a lot of formal essays for their classes, and I can tell them from personal experience that writing skills are important for any major," said Kelly Miller, an tutor in her junior year at IU.

Kelly is double majoring in biology and English with a minor in chemistry.

She notes that despite differences between lab reports and literary analyses, they're actually much more alike than many might

## ENGLISH

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Are YOU an  
English Major?

# Writing at the office

*Ingrid applied her tutor training to her summer job*

BY INGRID FEUSTEL

I had my first experience in a classic office setting this summer when I interned as a technical writer and editor. The corporation I worked for designed, among other things, software programs to help people run automated systems in industrial buildings.

As a technical writer, I was working on customer documentation, or, in other words, instruction manuals.

While the material was dry and kind of (very) boring, I definitely earned a newfound appreciation for how difficult it is to write in this style, and how different aspects of the work environment affect the dynamic of writing.

Instruction manuals, while dry, are hard to write. They require excruciating specificity and clarity. Guides need to work for someone who is an expert and for someone who has little to no knowledge of the system.

Slight changes in tone and format can be distressing and confusing to a user. And people with knowledge of the system can easily overlook something that seems obvious to them, but this information is essential for the novice user to use the product with confidence.

Writing as a team is also a challenge because different team members have different knowledge of the product.

My project team consisted of about 11 members, including me two engineers, an architect, five technical writers, an editor and a project manager.

Early in the process I realized that team members in different disciplines were using different words to talk about the software. It occurred to me that a team glossary was going to be necessary to keep

## TECHNICAL

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# Nothing ever really changes

BY MADDIE GREEN

At first, I didn't really think I could rely on my WTS experience when tutoring a group of 'at risk' students in a local middle school.

For instance, at WTS I was never asked which One Direction member I found the cutest. Nor would taking my students on a mini "field trip" to watch the falling snow render me as a "like the coolest tutor ever" in the WTS environment.

On top of that, the majority of my middle school tutoring sessions involve that abhorrent phenomenon many English majors cringe at—math. Regardless of these differences, I still find myself doing a Jake record in my head at the end of every session.

One student was a recurring member of my mental Jake

## MIDDLE SCHOOL

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**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:  
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## ENGLISH

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imagine.

“In biology or chemistry, a conclusion to a lab report must interpret your data and identify ways in which your experiment could be expanded in the future, much in the same way that a concluding paragraph of an essay must analyze the evidence you’ve presented,” Miller said.

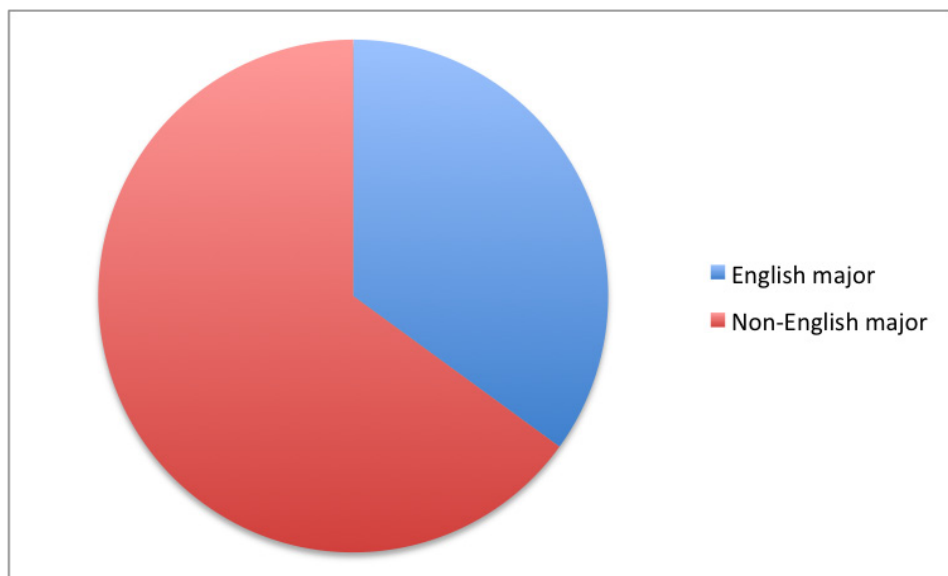
Caroline Luu, a senior undergraduate tutor with four majors throughout two different colleges, echoes Miller’s sentiments.

Luu is pursuing degrees in Spanish, psychology, international business and legal studies, and this academic diversity is reflected in her ability to connect with tutees.

“One of the best parts of being a WTS tutor is the exposure to students who are taking classes in a very wide variety of disciplines,” Luu said.

“My training as a business major has strongly impacted my work with Kelley students. I get the opportunity to show other Kelley students how to be concise and write well. Because I have taken

### WTS Peer Tutors’ Major Distribution



The number of WTS tutors who are English majors is not what many students expect.

Graph by Katie Beasley

their classes, I can empathize with what they are going through.”

Undergraduate tutors aren’t the only WTS employees with varied interests.

Junqin “Chinchin” Li, a 1L student in the Maurer School of Law, said his experience in deciphering complex law material—notorious for being unreadable—helps him to “quickly identify patterns of unclear reasoning and poor flow,” which every tutor knows is a tricky

subject to tackle.

Chinchin is one of two law students who work for WTS.

No matter his or her field of study, every WTS tutor brings the analytical thinker ability to the job.

Employees with many interests and areas of expertise enrich the staff—a staff held together by a common commitment to the written word, and a desire to help fellow Hoosiers.

# Alumnae profile of Katie Zarich

BY CAROLINE LUU

Katie Zarich is a former Writing Tutorial Services tutor who currently works at the Indianapolis Museum of Art as the Deputy Director for Public Affairs.

Before working at the IMA, Zarich worked for the Capital Improvement Board of Managers

of Marion County.

While in Bloomington, she received Bachelors of Arts Degrees in Political Science and Religious Studies as well as the Liberal Arts Management Program certificate.

Zarich was on the Theta Little 500 team, and she later attended

the Indiana University School of Law in Indianapolis.

Zarich’s favorite memory of working at WTS was the diversity, because many of the tutors come

**ZARICH**

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## ZARICH

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from completely different academic backgrounds. Zarich said, “I loved talking to people in the bull pen.”

Other than just good memories, Zarich gained an array of skills from her time at Indiana University that she uses in her career.

These include interpersonal skills, the ability to evaluate and respond to clients’ needs, and crossing cultural lines.

Her experience with international students is invaluable to her job at the IMA today. Zarich said, “I put together so many exhibits with people all around the world.”

Because she speaks with people in many different countries, she

must manage many different sets of expectations, and her time as a writing tutor developed the necessary intercultural communication skills.

Zarich does have some advice for current WTS tutors. She believes that the most important thing tutors can do is contacting, connecting, and talking to professionals who are in the field that they want to enter.

Zarich got her first job out of college through the network she had cultivated at her internship at the Office of Mayor Bart Peterson, so she believes that everyone should utilize her network effectively.

Zarich said, “You have to be specific. If you tell me that you want a job in the arts, I don’t know what to tell you. If you tell me that



Katie Beyer Zarich during her tutor years.

Photo courtesy of Laura Plummer

you want to be the registrar of an art museum, then I can tell you who to talk to and connect you to them.”

Zarich said she believes knowing what you want is how you find the best opportunities.

## TECHNICAL

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consistency throughout the documentation.

As someone with little knowledge of the software, I was at an advantage. I could see these differences because I was trying to learn the system from a group of people whose understanding differed from one another.

Learning how to talk to the engineers was definitely a practice in patience, just like some tutorials.

Often I would meet with an engineer, then sit down to write my assignment, only to realize that I had not understood a lot of what the engineer said.

Becoming fluent in a field quickly, with little or no outside

knowledge, is something we do as tutors every day.

Sometimes our outside opinion is really very valuable, and allows us to see inconsistencies or undefined terms with greater ease than a topic expert, but sometimes it means we have to work a little harder so that we make sure we know enough to help the writer.

The last lesson I learned was how to give feedback to people who didn’t really want it. I was the most junior member on the team and the only American technical writer.

The others were from Switzerland and India. At first, I was sending feedback, only to have the next draft returned to me with few or no changes.

It turned out that my tone was causing people to be dismissive of

my feedback. Making suggestions and asking leading questions is not appropriate when the product is going to be a reflection on the company—rather, an attitude of command was what I needed in order to be taken seriously.

However, this needed to be balanced against cultural differences and differences of authority. All in all, this was an interesting summer. Transferring my tutoring skills to the business world was a challenge, but I think it helped me develop as a professional and a peer tutor.

In a sense, tutors are professional novices. We come into a situation, and our ignorance is our advantage. We have to use our intuition to figure out how to adapt our tone and behavior to each customer in order to get the best results.



## MIDDLE SCHOOL

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records; she was a consistently difficult tutee.

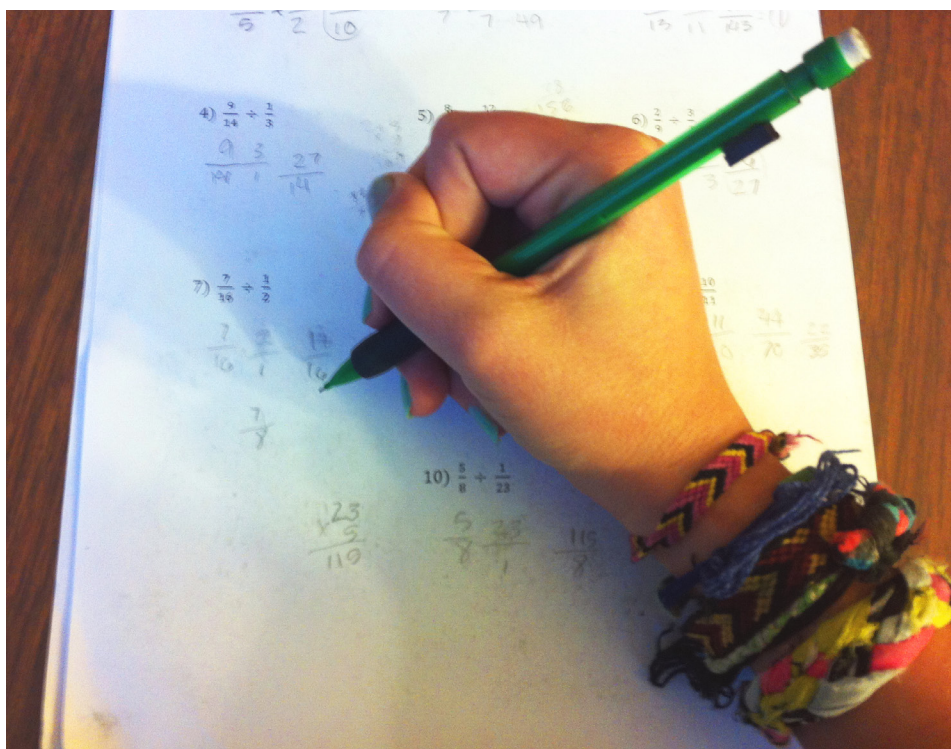
At first, a tutor might think she was simply a lazy student not wanting to do the work. She would either wait for me to do the problem for her or fiddle with her Ipad—yes, all students at this school have one now!

However, I hypothesized that she struggled with the same obstacle as many of my WTS tutees: a lack of confidence. This realization prompted me to look back through all of my WTS training and experience. I then decided to do the first problem with her step by step.

Every time she correctly performed a step, I acknowledged the success and had her repeat the process for each subsequent step. And Voila! We just fixed a dangling modifier—I mean fraction. They are the same thing, really.

By the end of the tutorial, we were both smiling, and the worksheet was finished with time to spare.

All a tutor needed to do for this tutee was to show her that she does have the knowledge and the ability to do math! Sounds like a Jake



Maddie helps a tutee figure out her assigned math problems.

Photo courtesy of Maddie Green

recommendation, does it not?

Driving back to IU, I began to think of how amazing it was that I could have a near identical experience tutoring a 12 year old in math as I would a college student in W131 Elementary Composition.

Like many college freshman, my middle school tutee was thrust into the world of a new school. And like many students that seek help from WTS, she had been struggling

with her course work, and had been plagued with the threat of that big bad F! And like nearly all of our tutees, what she needed most was a little affirmation.

So I guess there really isn't much difference between tutoring a 12-year-old Bieber fan or a 19-year-old Kelley student. No matter what age or stage students are in, confidence is still the greatest thing a tutor can give to them.

## Tutor brings WTS to Intensive Freshman Seminars

BY DECKER CAVOSIE

Last summer I interned for esteemed history Professor David Pace during the Intensive Freshman Seminars (IFS). I was one of the younger interns, and I knew little about the topic of the course, which

dealt with the history of Paris, France, from 1850 to 1900.

So I felt I had some disadvantages coming into the program. I had taken an IFS course the previous summer and had a fantastic

experience, so I was determined to give an exemplary performance despite my lack of experience in the

**SEMINARS**  
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regular budget expenses. One good example is providing travel money to peer tutors who present at our regional Writing Center Association annual conference.

Why give to WTS? Bill claims both public and personal reasons: "I feel compelled to donate to WTS because writing at the college level is challenging, so having an easily accessible writing resource staffed with well-trained and

compassionate tutors from across the university curriculum ensures that all students have the opportunity to succeed."

"Personally, I want future tutors to share the amazing experience I had during my time at WTS. The

To give online, visit this link:

<http://www.iub.edu/~wts/givenow.shtml>

unique friendships forged and skills developed as a tutor have carried far beyond my years in Bloomington. What I learned at WTS has been

just as relevant to my professional success as any course I took."

Perhaps you found that your time at WTS was useful to you, too. If so, I hope you'll consider making WTS part of your IU giving. A gift—of any amount—will help us strengthen our program.

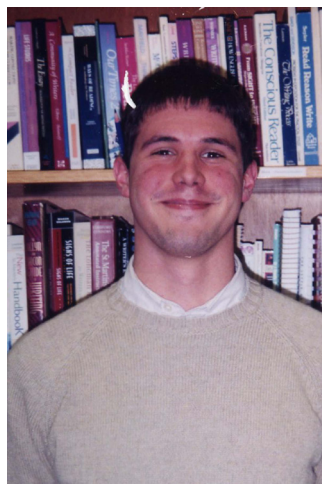
I've joined this amazing group as a donor. Will you? It's really quite simple.

Thanks again to Katie, Garth, Bill, Jen, Katie, Jon, Sarah, Allison, Alison, and Kyle for launching the WTS fund, and thanks to all you future sponsors!

Photos courtesy of WTS Archives



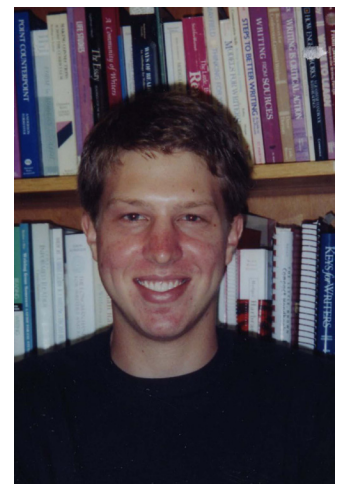
Bill Trovinger



Kyle Springman



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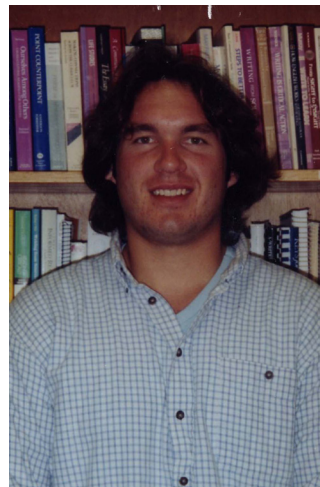
Garth Stahl



Jen Woodall Johnston



Allison Mikkalo



Jon Zarich



Katie Beyer Zarich



## SEMINARS

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program and course topic. Despite my shortcomings, the training I received as a WTS peer tutor gave me invaluable guidance to excel in my internship.

Internships at the IFS program can mean different things for different professors. The main duty of some is test grading, while others actually get the chance to teach in front of the class.

At the end of each day, my students gave presentations about the topics discussed earlier in the day, so my main duty was to assist them with their projects and answer questions.

The students' problems at the beginning of the course resembled weaknesses I commonly encounter in essays as a WTS peer tutor: their presentations relied heavily on plot-summary in a book report-type format rather than analysis of Parisian culture.

After the first day of presentations, Professor Pace and I evaluated their projects and discussed what we could do to ensure the students made improvements.

Professor Pace thought I could be an invaluable resource working alongside the students' groups as they worked on their projects. I felt confident in my ability to shift the students into an analysis-driven mindset—I had an entire semester of WTS training at my disposal.



Decker and Professor Pace pose for a "fun" picture with their IFS class.

Photo courtesy of Decker Cavosie

For the next two weeks I hounded my students with questions as they strung together their arguments, evidence and analysis.

I presented a PowerPoint over basic essay structure using resources from the WTS website (and of course made a couple of plugs for our fine organization). Professor Pace and I got the students in the mindset of treating their presentations as acted-out essays.

Since my WTS training, I've internalized the habit of questioning students into the correct answer instead of flat out prescribing instruction.

By the end of the course, my students focused on making debatable claims instead of reiterating facts. They achieved this skill set by their own doing with only my gentle WTS influenced nudging and guidance.

On her final paper, one student even argued a claim with which she disagreed to ensure debatability and critical thought. This was one of my proudest moments in the IFS program.

She gave herself more work by choosing this argument—a task even I would be reluctant to tackle—but she wanted to display the skills Professor Pace and I had taught the class.

This student exemplified Professor Pace's purpose for his class programming, and she speaks to his success in preparing freshmen for the world of academia.

Someday I want to be a teacher, and my experience with IFS confirmed this aspiration. And I met success at IFS because of WTS—because of my training and experience tutoring students.

**Interact with  
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WTS Alumni



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# Our WTS Alumni Directory

*Updated Dec. 6, 2012*

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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](mailto:byourwts@indiana.edu).

Thanks!

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## New WTS alumnae joins the ranks

*Rebekah Sims WTS's only December 2012 graduate*

I will be teaching English at North Side High School in Fort Wayne, Indiana, beginning in January 2013.

**Rebekah Sims**  
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Photo courtesy of Rebekah Sims



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