By Our WTS Issue 8.1, Dec. 2013

TUTORIAL SERVICES ALUMNI NEWSLETTER THE IU

I lived the language barrier with success

One tutor's fall 2013 was one big teachable moment



From right to left sit Pepe Chozas Plasencia, Emily McKnight and Leo Weib. Pepe lists what he is thankful for as Pepe and Leo enjoy their first Thanksgiving.

Photo courtsey of Emily McKnight

BY EMILY MCKNIGHT

We're told it is a small world we live in. Even as a child, I took issue with the logic of this blanket statement.

The world did not seem so small during my twenty-four hour transatlantic flight, nor did it feel small during my family's seventeen-hour drive to Disney World. I was told that these are semantics, and I am too literal. Maybe so.

I am a junior at IU, pursuing degrees in English literature and psychology.

This academic year, however, I am far from the Sample Gates and Indiana Memorial Union in all of

their glory. Instead, I am studying at the University of Kent in Canterbury, England, where I am writing this article.

Before leaving the United States, and for a few days once I had arrived in England, I had this idea of what life outside of Bloomington looked like. It was big. It was colorful. It was so fantastically different.

Low and behold, it's not necessarily any of these things. Life, with all its peaks and plateaus, is surprisingly universal.

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WTS opens more doors

BY KIMBERLY SMITH

This semester is my first working at Writing Tutorial Services, and already I have made connections that have benefited me as I work toward my professional goals.

Not only have I had the opportunity to network with WTS alumni, staff and tutors, but I also made one very helpful professional connection with a tutee.

One Sunday while I was working in the Academic Support Center at Briscoe, a graduate student came in for help on a paper. I was concerned at first that I was not properly equipped to tutor a graduate student and worried that I would not understand the content of his paper.

Then I discovered that he was a student in the Higher Education and Student Affairs (HESA) program at IU. This was a lucky coincidence as I am currently applying to graduate schools in student affairs.

During that tutorial, I got to talk with the student about

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WTS skills aid tutor in building lesson plans

Peer tutor teaches English across diciplines and skill levels in a language still difficult for her



Peer tutor Katie Beasley works with students on their English at German nongovernmental organization, Fundación Hanss Seidel in Ecuador, a small country in South America.

Photo courtsey of Katie Beasley

BY KATIE BEASLEY

It's hard to believe that this time last year I was finishing up last minute preparations for a semester abroad in South America.

Thanks to the support of family, friends and IU, I was lucky to spend spring 2013 in Ecuador, a small Andean country roughly

the size of Colorado that gets its name from its location on the equator.

Although I didn't know what to expect, I had a sense of

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Tutor takes on the challenege

BY DECKER CAVOSIE

In fall 2012, I was ecstatic to start my first semester as a WTS tutor. I held the lessons from the previous semester's training course in the foreground of my thoughts.

I was ready for everything: the handshake and friendly introduction, the "guided" questions, the insightful conversation, the suggestions nested between compliments and every helpful tutoring technique under the sun.

However, working at the Briscoe Quad ASC, a location never as busy as I would have liked, I didn't have steady opportunities to apply my training. I grew rusty before I got good.

This trend continued the following semester when I tutored at the Willkie Quad ASC (a temporary location), where on numerous nights I would go the full 4-hours without a single tutoring session.

So at the beginning of this semester, already a full year of tutoring under my belt, I signed up to work at the busy location, Teter Quad ASC, for the busy time slot, Monday nights. I hoped that having a busy shift would allow me to improve my tutoring style and become more comfortable with myself as a tutor.

Even though I didn't consider myself a poor tutor my sophomore year, I definitely felt the need for improvement. Mainly, I wasn't as

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For a girl who put stock in the variety of life outside of the U.S. dominion, this realization came as quite a shock.

Now, do not let me mislead you. Canterbury is phenomenal. But I have come to realize that a change of location is just that—a change of location. On its own, it will not radically change your life, worldview, hopes or dreams. That you must do for yourself.

Like most travelers, I came to Kent wanting a change—wanting to change. However, what I found was much the same as what I had left: teaching and learning.

Surprisingly, I have found plenty of opportunities to tutor on this side of the Atlantic. Another testament to the universality of life: the ubiquitous struggle of articulating ideas.

My flat mates are non-native English speakers. Pepe Chozas Plasencia is from Madrid. Leo Weib is from Berlin, and Siyu Fei (know to us as Faye) is from Hong Kong.

Our language blunders, mishaps and stumbles, coupled with our different cultural perspectives, make daily life hilariously sitcom-like.

These challenges make every day a little bit different, something that has nothing to do with my being in Kent but everything to do with my living in a multicultural enviornment.

For this reason, I understand as well as anyone the frustration of language barriers. It can be defeating to be understood only on the fifth attempt. It can be defeating to struggle over a language barrier only to fall back down again. But.

To them, English is magical. Every newly discovered word is a treat. Recently, the words "twang" and "indubitably" have been cropping up unexpectedly and unwarrantedly in our everyday conversation.

Being surrounded by such fascinated appreciation for language inspires the same child-like appreciation in me. We lose so much of our appreciation for language as it transitions from a new friend to a lifelong companion.

Our relationship with language falls into a rut, and sometimes it takes as much as living in a household built upon a tri-fold language barrier to remedy this fact.

Seeing Pepe, Leo and Faye become more confident speakers and writers is a more personal, drawnout and in-depth version of the growth we see over the course of a tutorial. I now have the privilege of seeing how comfort and confidence with language translates into everyday life.

This experience has reiterated the importance of listening and

patience because, as I've come to learn, not being able to understand and not being able to be understood are two of the most frustrating things of all. As tutors past and present, we share in this frustration.

We also share in the privilege of being a part, however small, of a process whose ultimate goal is a fluency of ideas. With front row seats to the academic and personal lives of three non-native speakers, I now understand that there is power in what tutors do.

As a tutor, I often forgot the purpose behind a frustratingly broken conversation over abstract ideas, structural issues and prepositions. I think I understand now. And I hope you understand, whoever and wherever you may be, that your work as a tutor matters.

No, it was not effect on a big scale, but I'm beginning to realize that the larger picture is simply a pixilation of many small pictures.

And while it may not change the face of the world, someone out there learned something from you. This was not a life-changing experience because I am here in Kent. I had to make it happen and learn from it.

So, thank you. Thank you for the reverse outlines, structural advice and grammar counseling, but most of all thank you for understanding.

Interact with WTS!







Forest gets a facelift

Forest Quad ASC is beginning to bustle with tutees



The Restaurants at Woodland might be what's bring more students into the ASC.

Photo courtsey of Megan Grimm

BY MFGAN GRIMM

With the renovations that took place in the Southeast neighborhood, it's no surprise that the Academic Support Center at Forest Quad has seen an increase in volume.

With lots of new and attractive incentives to draw students to the Southeast side of campus, it's impossible to cite any one factor as the reason behind the increased use of WTS at the Forest ASC.

As a psychology and economics double major, my interest is piqued. Speculation on the possible explanation is interesting.

Rose Avenue Residence Hall, a new residence hall at 1801 E. Jones Drive, was built in the Southeast neighborhood, and Forest now has a newly renovated center building that includes a contemporary dining hall, The Restaurants at Woodland.

The Restaurants at Woodland offers students nine unique micro-restaurants, including one that provides a steak dinner cooked to your personal preference.

The Restaurants at Woodland embrace currently popularized health trends, specifically the demand for frozen yogurt in the form of "BloomingBerry."

As always, there's the hopeful possibility that IU students are truly coming to realize the truth that's well understood by WTS tutors, namely that writing is as essential to a healthy GPA and survival in college as nutritious food is.

Are people coming to the Forest ASC more because they

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Senior leaves WTS



Emma Vice emvice@umail.iu.edu Indianapolis, Indiana

After graduation, I plan on moving back to my hometown. After taking some time off from my studies to finally relax, I hope to go to graduate school for secondary English education so I can transfer some of my love and appreciation for English literature and reading to high school students.

Working at WTS has really helped me with my communication skills that I think will be imperative in any kind of teaching job. I am extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to become more confident in my ability to teach and begin breaking out of my shy, introverted ways.

The one-on-one tutoring experience has confirmed my love for the English language and my strong desire to help students appreciate the skills that come with reading and writing analytically. I will greatly miss all of the wonderful, brilliant people I have gotten to know and work with at WTS. It has been an absolute pleasure being a part of this exceptional group.

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various theories in the field of student affairs.

As in other tutorials, I asked him questions about the concepts he was working with in order to help him better organize his ideas and to point out places where his logic was not conveyed to the reader.

By helping him to work through the material in his paper, I also was able to see an example of the type of work that would be expected of me in a HESA graduate program.

After we wrapped up the tutorial, I told him that I was interested in student affairs as a career path and potentially in going to graduate school at IU. He then informed me that he currently has an

assistantship with the Career Development Center as an advisor for students applying to graduate school. He wrote down his email address for me and invited me to set up an appointment with him.

"We can both help each other," he said. I did follow up with him and made an appointment, which turned out to be very helpful. I asked him questions about what I should be looking for in a graduate program and how to narrow down my list of potential schools.

He told me about the schools he looked at and the reasons why he chose the HESA program at IU.

I am also considering working and going to school part time next year. So we discussed the different "functional areas" or career paths within student affairs, and he told me in which of those areas I might be able to find an entry level position. He also critiqued my résumé and offered me tips for the application process.

Before the appointment ended, he gave me the name of another graduate student in the HESA program who worked at the Career Development Center so I could set up an appointment with her to discuss her experiences.

During a key appointment with her, I asked a lot of questions about the curriculum of IU's program and the opportunities to obtain professional experience in the field.

Because of WTS, I now have two new contacts in my field of interest. As I packed up my things at the end of my appointment with the student I had tutored, he said to me, "By the way, I got an A on that paper."

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comfortable with myself as a tutor as I felt I needed to be. I knew I could apply the techniques I learned in training, but sometimes I had trouble clearly communicating my ideas or making the session at least somewhat enjoyable for the student.

And I can say without a doubt that working at a busy ASC location has made me an exponentially better tutor. As in many cases for discourses and professions, training may offer the tools, but experience teaches how most effectively to use the tools and understand which tools are necessary for varying situations.

Most of all, having a regular flow of students at the Teter ASC forced

me to relax and enjoy the conversations each tutorial spurred.

To do otherwise would make my Monday nights overwhelming. And as most tutors know, tutorials are often more successful and productive when both tutor and tutee enjoy themselves as they go through the pedagogical process.

My service-learning professor would call this phenomenon co-production, meaning the tutor's service to the tutee is reciprocal, for she gains something valuable as well.

Tutorials based in co-production are immensely more enjoyable than preoccupation with worrying about how well the tutorial is going.

So when tutorial evaluations started this semester, I was excited to quantify the improvements I could feel every Monday night. Every tutorial that ended with the student filling out a green sheet, ranking and commenting on my performance, felt like the best tutorial of my life.

For me, there is no better feeling than walking away from a tutorial knowing the session couldn't have gone any better, that the student's paper is far better off and (hopefully) their writing skills are permanently improved, especially when they know it, and they had a good time!

I saw many smiles as students filled out their evaluations of me. What kind of student expects to walk out of a tutorial happy with the stress and anxiety of W131?

Taking that busy ASC shift led to these wonderful tutorials, and my career as a peer tutor is stronger than ever.

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have a steak dinner to look forward to afterward? With so many viable explanations, who's to say what factor or factors have contributed to our increase in Jake records logged at Forest?

While I am unable to speak to Forest's volume in the past—as this is my first semester tutoring at WTS—I'll share the limited knowledge I gathered this semester. Forest wasn't open due to renovations last year, and the third WTS walk-in service temporarily operated out of Wilkie Quad.

Last spring, during my WTS training, the impression formed in me that Forest was the least popular location. Despite the fact that Jo Ann remained optimistic about WTS' future prospects at Forest, I must admit I had my doubts.

I expected business at Forest would be slow. Today, it turns out the opposite is true, and thankfully so. I'm sure I'm not alone in saying this, but I'd take tutoring a fellow student in need, cultivating the writing process and empower-

ing thought over being a lone WTS tutor in the break room any day.

As a current tutor at Forest, I can certainly speak to WTS' visibly increased popularity with students.

It is not uncommon that when I show up for my weekly shift, which I have officially dubbed "Tutoring Tuesdays," I check the WTS sign-up sheet upon my arrival to discover that all the appointments are filled with the names of eager students.

In one script or another, messy or neat, numerous names are scribbled down where students have laid claim to their tutorial times. Even when their desired time is taken, they'll still sign up for their second choices.

Instead of looking like a walk-in service, WTS at Forest has started to look a lot more like WTS headquarters in the Herman B Wells Library Information Commons, with students coming in to sign up hours in advance to guarantee a spot with our valued service.

While many Forest students take advantage of the ASC, which is literally a staircase away, so too do other Southeast students from Read Quad and Rose.

The students of the southeast neighborhood are well represented, and Forest even has an established fan base in its returning clientele. One such person, whom I have personally tutored three times, is a freshman.

At the end of our last tutorial, I caved to my curiosity and asked her what she liked most about the ASC at Forest.

She responded, "WTS is really close. I live in Read. I like it because you guys explain the process behind the format of the paper we're writing. Plus you guys are here every night."

Increasingly, our efforts at WTS are appreciated. Not only that, but my tutee's answer shows that our purpose is not lost on the students whose writing abilities we work to improve. At Forest and the other ASCs, it seems that some students are realizing that writing is a process, not an end result.

They are finding that there are definite rewards to reap from dedicating their time and energy to the process, and it could very well be this fact that keeps them coming back for more.

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: byourwts@indiana.edu

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adventure and an eager determination to improve my Spanish.

The skills I had developed as a writing tutor at WTS enabled me to be flexible and to think about my native language from the outside looking in.

The program I took part in used a full-immersion method, and a unique component of the immersion program was the opportunity to do an internship within the Quito community, the capital of Ecuador.

As a School of Public and Environmental Affairs major with an interest in government, I had hoped to gain work experience in a setting related to politics.

The coordinator of our program was determined to find each of us an internship in which we could engage in hands-on participation.

However, she was afraid that a political internship would consist of more coffee fetching and paper scanning than actual service and skill-building.

So without knowing quite what I was getting myself into, I was placed as an English teacher in Fundación Hanss Seidel, a German non-governmental organization that gives scholarships to indigenous students and publishes documents on political transparency.

The organization's mission was in line with my interests and provided me with the chance to interact directly with Ecuadorians in a meaningful way, which was my goal for the internship

experience.

During my time at FHS, I improved my Spanish and formed valuable friendships with my students and the people that worked in the office.

However, I hadn't anticipated that English teaching would be such a challenge. I wasn't provided any materials or any set schedule.

I was completely responsible for coming up with appropriate lesson plans for the varying skill levels of my students and for setting hours that worked with not only my schedule, but also the schedules of the office supervisor and the university students I was working with.

Having no training in English teaching, the experience was overwhelming for me at first.

It was difficult to come up with lesson plans when many times I was working with students of vastly different backgrounds.

One of my students was a law student who had been learning English for years, and another didn't know any English and wanted to start from scratch.

Finding the proper dynamic for handling these sessions was a tricky process that only became easier through trial and error.

As challenging as being an English teacher for the first time was, I constantly wondered how much more difficult it would have been had I not had a couple of years of tutoring experience under my belt from back at home.

Although most non-native speakers who come to WTS primarily speak Asian languages, I felt that experience with these

Spanish-speaking students made me much more sensitive to and aware of certain learning difficulties.

For example, although Spanish does have prepositions, it doesn't have the wide variety found in the English language. Therefore, I knew that tackling prepositions would take some extra time, effort and creativity, so I planned accordingly.

The ability to work one-on-one with an individual was another WTS skill that I carried over into my role as a teacher at FHS.

Without even realizing it, I found myself setting up lessons much like tutorials.

I liked to sit down in an informal way and ask my students questions about themselves to ease them into speaking English and feeling comfortable working with me, just as I do at WTS.

And of course, I always strove to be empathetic and put the concerns of the student at the forefront of the lesson.

Tutoring and teaching are two very different roles, as I'm sure many of the education majors and graduate students at WTS would agree.

Even so, I think my short stint as an English teacher in Ecuador proved to me that my work experience at WTS has been not only fun and rewarding, but also professionally valuable.

Being a tutor has helped me to become personable, flexible and culturally aware. These are skills that will serve me well no matter what life's next challenge may be.

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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.

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SUPPORT WTS!

Have you ever wished you could do more for Writing Tutorial Services even after leaving IU?

Writing Tutorial Services is an affinity group, just like a greek house or Little 500 team. As tutors, we come together with a common interest and shared pride in our school. (After all, we help our fellow students succeed!)

You can now directly support WTS with a contribution to the IU Foundation. Check out the link on the WTS homepage: www.indiana.edu/~wts

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

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