What is your WTS space wishlist?

Amber Hendricks re-imagines the WTS office space in the Herman B Wells Library

Amber commissions a desk for Anita that would have plenty of storage space!

BY AMBER HENDRICKS

Peer tutor Amber Hendricks lists her top needs/desires for the new Herman B Wells Library WTS space. The specifics of the new space are still undecided but are said to be implemented fall 2014.

Number ONE

At the top of this list is a door! We very much would like to lock our WHOLE space at night.

We would love for Anita to keep things on her desk without fear of returning the next day to find gone.

People steal bobble heads desks. The danger is real. We like to ensure the safety and preservation of all our materials.

To protect our precious laptops.

To guard our glorious glossaries.

Please, universe. Give us a door!

DOOR continues on page 3
From zero to her-o-kay, tutor

Future peer tutor details his dark past with writing and its happy ending, proving that not every tutor loves writing, but that isn’t what’s important

BY ALEC STEINMETZ

I’ve felt out of place in the WTS practicum a few times now. The first time was during our first meeting when Jo Ann had us introduce ourselves by sharing our favorite books.

I don’t read for pleasure much, and I don’t have a favorite book. At the beginning of the Jambo-reec, I felt out of place, as it was once again clear that I was in a room full of people who have always enjoyed reading and writing.

I didn’t learn how to read until second grade, and I certainly haven’t enjoyed writing until recently.

When I still couldn’t read in second grade, my mom knew I was as smart as everyone else in my class, so she had me tested for learning disabilities. Sure enough, I have ADHD and am dyslexic.

So, starting in second grade, I was tutored under the Orton-Gillingham Approach. Despite the effectiveness of the tutoring, I still struggled with English classes. It wasn’t that the work was too difficult, but rather I felt that I couldn’t compete with my classmates who had learned to read and write years before me.

The peak of my struggle with English classes was when I received a D+ in Advanced Placement Language Composition my junior year of high school.

As a result of that D+, IU deferred me the first time I applied. Knowing my college options were limited, I worked harder than ever during my first semester senior year to ensure that I would get into IU. After reapplying, I got in.

With high school behind me, I decided to face my fear of writing by signing up for ENG-W170 Intro to Argumentative Writing the first

What I feared as a soon-to-be writing tutor at WTS

BY HANNAH MURRAY

This article was written in March before the completion of the WTS practicum. Some of the concerns in this article are addressed in training.

To be completely honest, I am fairly nervous for when April 11 rolls around, and I will have my first tutoring session at WTS.

I can’t decide what is more nerve-wracking: having back-to-back sessions for every shift I work or not having a single appointment.

The former makes me concerned I will not be tutoring my best without a break in between.

The latter makes me think I will not get enough practice as a tutor in order to improve.

Fortunately, Jo Ann has provided wonderful encouragement.

One of my initial tutoring fears was receiving a draft of a business memo or lab report and not knowing a single thing about the subject matter since I am majoring in English and religious studies.

But Jo Ann reminded all of us trainees that we don’t have to know everything, that our ignorance of a particular subject could actually be beneficial for the students because our questions of clarification can aid them in developing their drafts.

My lack of knowledge regarding the steps of ionization or the structure of a business memo should not be considered a hindrance, but helpful to the students.

Another fear of mine is the possibility of being handed a paper that seems to fulfill all the criteria perfectly. It would make me think I read the prompt incorrectly.

But Jo Ann reminded us that
We at WTS just really want a door. We have been reaching for it for so long, even individual peer tutors like Jordan Riley are wishing for one.

This would make a fabulous replacement for Jo Ann’s throne. A throne of dictionaries and thesauruses and citation manuals.

Only a chair as magnificent as this could be fit for our WTS Queen.

Number Six

Our space, as it is, is very drab in terms of décor. Of course this is the nature of an open layout. The area doesn’t belong exclusively to WTS, so it can’t have our charm.

But if it could, obviously it should feature picture collages capturing the adventures of our employees, comics about teaching, some of those ridiculous inspirational posters, etc.

Are we allowed to be artsy? If we’re allowed to be artsy, we should really feature local artists because we care about that. Bring us your art, Bloomington!

Number Seven

This is definitely the most outlandish option, but I can’t let it go. I want this slide (see image 2 on Page 1). I want our tutees to glide into WTS on this slide.

Tutees could be just as comfortable in their chairs as they are with our friendly and helpful tutors!

But only after they’ve walked through our newly installed door, of course. Then they can climb back up the shelves upon shelves of books, satisfied with our excellent services, eager to slide back down into our space again for their next tutorial.

Number Eight

Mostly we just want the door, though.
WTS peer tutor speaks at ECWCA Conference on tutoring non-native English-speaking students

BY BELLE KIM

On the day of my presentation, I slipped into my bright pink panda flats and marched down the brick pavement that covered the campus of Miami University.

I adjusted the straps of my East Central Writing Centers Association badge and, flicking off the beads of rain that had gathered on my coat, pushed open the door to the conference room where I would be giving my presentation.

I pulled the PowerPoint onto the screen and met the expectant gaze of the assembled conference goers, who sat in their seats with notebooks and pens laid out for assiduous note taking.

My boss, after giving a quick introduction of WTS, looked back at me with a reassuring smile. My cue. I began by providing a brief overview of the international student population at IU.

There are more than 6,000 international students at this University. About 40 to 50 percent of the students we help at the writing center, in fact, are international students.

These statistics show how important it is for us to have conversations about tutoring non-native speakers and the special challenges they may pose.

Part of my qualifications for discussing such a topic, I explained, is the fact that I myself am an international student who didn’t speak a word of English upon arrival into the United States.

I asked the gathered peer tutors and writing center employees what some of their concerns were when it came to working with non-native speakers.

Many were worried that when they spoke with international students, they would not be able to communicate effectively.

They also said they felt many non-native speakers insisted on focusing on grammatical mistakes as opposed to higher-level concerns and that they did not really know how to help them with grammatical errors.

This discussion provided a useful segue way into a conversation about the importance of body language and strategies such as writing down key points from the tutorial so the student can refer to them later, using the dictionary when explaining parts of speech and prepositions, and urging students to come in for brainstorming sessions.

We also talked about issues with plagiarism and what kind of resources to offer students who are seeking help with improving their English skills.

Afterward, an enlightening question and answer session alerted me to the fact that many peer tutors from various universities receive little training before they are unleashed upon the student body.

One of the peer tutors asked, “What should I do when an international student comes in and wants to just discuss grammar? I obviously can’t go through every single mistake on the paper and fix them, so what is an effective strategy?”

I told her to pick out the most glaring errors that impede meaning, and address repeating patterns of mistakes rather than attempt to address each little problem.

Later, she told me that she had only received training for two weeks and that the instruction she had received upon being hired had not focused much on how to tutor international students.

She asked me for my PowerPoint and told me the information had been really helpful, which assuaged my fears that everything I’d told them had been obvious and simple.

On the three-hour drive back, for much of which I was blissfully asleep in the back seat, I mused upon how lucky we are here at WTS to have been provided a semester-long training on how to tutor effectively.

We were even paid to learn how to be good tutors. As I drifted in and out of consciousness, I mused upon how grateful I felt to have been given the opportunity to present at a conference as a puny undergraduate tutor and to have been part of such an amazing writing center over the past year.
PAST
from page 2

semester of my freshman year.

W170 is an alternative to ENG-
W131 Elementary Composition,
the basic composition course.

After receiving C's on the first
few assignments and no construc-
tive feedback, I dropped the class.

I had to earn my required writ-
ing credit eventually, so I signed
up to take W131 in the fall of my
sophomore year.

I knew what I needed to do
if I was going to pass W131, so I
worked tirelessly on the first major
paper.

I won't deny that I cried on the
stairs in Ballantine Hall after class
the day I got my paper back. I got
an A+! Still crying, I called my
mom to tell her.

For some reason, I figured my
first A+ would be the peak of my
writing career. But then on Essay 2
I got an A, and on Essay 3 I got an-
other A+, giving me an A in W131.

Toward the end of that semes-
ter, I got an email saying I had been
recommended to apply for WTS.
So I applied, interviewed and got
hired.

I've realized that the key to my
writing success was my shift in
confidence, so I am thrilled to have
the opportunity to help students
increase their confidence in
writing.

One of the most powerful
things I've learned in the practicum
is that everyone learns pieces of the
writing process at different times
and rates.

This gives me clarity on my pre-
vious struggle with writing and will
help me help students understand
their writing struggles.

At the Jamboree, it was clear
to me that a lifelong passion for
English is not what being a writing
tutor is about.

Being a writing tutor is about
helping students realize their
potential. My WTS experience has
changed my life, as it has been piv-
otal to my realizing my potential.

And I haven't even started
tutoring yet.

FEARS
from page 2

perfect papers do not exist, and
there is always something to work
on, even if it is as miniscule as find-
ing patterns of grammatical errors
and showing the student how a
certain grammar rule works.

I think what has provided me
with the most comfort is the mock-
tutoring exercise in class when we
took turns being the tutor and the
tutee with a partner trainee.

All of us had to write our own
essay and have it looked over by
another tutor trainee. Given that
all of us are strong writers, it was a
challenge to find anything wrong
with my partner's paper.

This was good practice for fo-
cusing on the lower level concerns
of writing, such as grammatical
errors and tweaking sentences.

On the one hand, I don't really
know everything to expect as a
tutor, and maybe it is the unknown
of tutoring that makes me the most
anxious.

It makes me think of when I
go up to present in front of a class
of thirty-plus students, shaking
with the fear of stumbling over my
words, or worse: not remembering
a single thing.

In those first few minutes prior
to the actual presentation, I am the
most anxious, wondering and fear-
ing exactly how the presentation
will go.

But everything always ends up
being fine once I actually start the
presentation and focus on what I
am saying rather than the fear of
how many ways I could mess up.

I see tutoring panning out the
same way.

My fear will lead up until the
very start of my first session, and
then I will be too busy helping the
student by either asking open-end-
ed questions or brainstorming pos-
sible essay topics to even remember
being afraid.

Interact with
WTS!

WTS Alumni @IUB_WTS_Help byourwts@indiana.edu
Peer tutors reveal their worst tutoring experiences

Peer tutors tell their “horror” tutoring stories, demonstrating that even during the rare rough tutorials, there is always something to be learned...or at least laughed at! Continue reading below to discover five tutors’ personal accounts of their stand-out experience and how they pulled through.

Farmers and Christians
KIMBERLY SMITH

My not-so-horrifying “WTS Horror Story” happened at Briscoe one evening.

The student had a psychology paper but had decided to write it in a business memo format, saying that he wanted to transition to a more “professional” form of writing.

The paper was incredibly confusing. Whenever I asked for clarification, he would respond by simply reading what he had written or by saying something to the effect of, “Isn't that obvious?” with a judgmental glance at me.

After a few of these inquiries, he declared, “I’m not writing this paper for farmers and Christians! I’m writing it for academics and professionals.”

Apparently, in this student’s mind farmers and Christians are the epitome of stupidity.

The student continued to explain away all of my questions and pieces of advice throughout the tutorial. And by the end, I don’t believe I had offered a single suggestion that he actually planned to implement.

It was a rough hour, but it makes for an amusing story now!

I REALLY want to study public policy
INGRID FEUSTEL

I think my worst WTS tutorial was actually my first. I was meeting with a student who was working on an application to the School of Public and Environmental Affairs.

The essay she brought was full of personal anecdotes about her childhood, and I couldn’t tell whether it was a personal statement or a response to a specific prompt. I asked if I could read the prompt, and I discovered that she should have been answering the question, “Why do you want to be a public policy major?”

After talking with the student for a while about her thoughts on this question, I realized that she didn’t actually know what people who study public policy do.

The student was a little distraught, and I was more than a little distraught on her behalf.

However, we managed to end the tutorial on a reasonable note after writing down some questions she could ask a SPEA advisor to learn more about public policy.

Can you write it for me?
ANJONA GHOSH

“I don’t know where to start,” the student told me as we sat down to a 50-minute tutorial session at the Teter Academic Support Center.

SMILE continues on page 7

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
His concern seemed like a fairly straightforward problem, and I started to ask him about what ideas he had for his argument. If we could come up with a thesis statement together, I thought, he would have a better idea of how to write his introduction.

We talked in depth about the class readings, about how to put them in conversation with each other, and he seemed on the cusp of developing a thesis statement.

Then it began again. “I don’t know how to start it,” he said when I suggested that he draft a thesis statement right then and there.

I tried telling him that if he just wrote something down on paper, we could edit it together. “I don’t know how to start it,” he repeated to me.

So I suggested, more specifically, that he write inferences about the patterns we had noted for nearly a half hour together. Still he wouldn’t budge.

Finally, when I started to make a suggestion, I noticed he grabbed his pencil, writing down every word that I said verbatim.

I stopped myself immediately and asked him to just take two minutes and write down what came to his head. We were back to square one.

As much as I tried to help him help himself that night, he fought me every step of the way.

“I don’t think it can really be shortened,” he told me as I recommended he revise his three-sentence thesis statement down to one.

But at the end of the tutorial, I was simply proud the words on the page were his and not mine.

Comma splices make people cry
EMILY MCKNIGHT

My very first tutorial was my very worst tutorial. I was working in Briscoe, and a girl came in with a short paper about her experience at IU thus far (she was a sophomore).

Believing that I was following the tutoring script and, therefore, nothing could go wrong, I asked her what she had written about.

Well, in the span of five minutes she was bawling and telling me how few friends she had on campus and how difficult she found IU. This was definitely not covered in training.

I comforted her as best I could, and then steered the conversation back to comma splices and the like because I have no counseling skills. Truthfully, though, I was able to recommend a few counseling centers that I hope she visited.

And that is the story of why a girl broke down in tears during my very first tutorial!

That is all
DANA KOGLIN

I think I’ve had a couple painful tutorials, but this is the one that sticks out in my mind.

I was tutoring an international student, and as is the case a lot times in my experience, all she wanted was someone to edit her grammar.

I spent at least a good five minutes right off explaining to her that my fixing her grammar was only to her grade’s benefit on this assignment.

And since my job is to, as Jo Ann always says, put ourselves out of business by teaching applicable skills, I could not do what she asked—no matter how much she felt she needed it.

Offering some constructive criticism, I explained that she was using participles in the place of verbs, basically using “i-n-g” words incorrectly. I pointed out a couple examples of this and explained that that was all I could do for her.

The tutorial ended, and I went to enter my record. Then, the ASC desk person came in, saying that my tutee had another question. I was apprehensive, but I went back out. Mistake!

She had her paper open on her laptop and had done a Ctrl-F search on “i-n-g.” She then proceeded to go through each instance in which “i-n-g” appeared and ask me if it was correct.

I continued with my earlier speech, but it was not to her satisfaction. I finally just told her I would get fired if I edited her paper.

She told me she didn’t think so. I continued to refuse, so she quickly said “that is all” and turned away from me. I had been dismissed.

Worst of all, this was when the Forest ASC was in Willkie Quad. In that setup, the writing tutoring tables were also our “bull pen” of sorts. And the girl wouldn’t leave.

I spent the next hour and a half hiding behind the ASC front desk. I was scared then, but it makes me laugh looking back.

Plus, how can you appreciate the amazing tutorials without a few rough ones?
WTS says goodbye to Seniors

Katherine Swintz
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Indianapolis, IN

After I finish up with classes this summer, I’ll be moving back to Indianapolis to take a gap year before entering graduate school for a master’s in speech pathology.

I’m hoping to get into the program at Ball State University, but I won’t be starting the application process until the end of the summer.

WTS was actually a big factor in my decision to enter into speech pathology. I’m an English and comparative literature major, and I always thought I would go into publishing.

Working with students at WTS, especially those who study English as a second language, helped me realize that I want to help people communicate and not necessarily from behind a desk or through writing.

I’m ridiculously grateful for all of the opportunities this job has afforded me.

Katie Beasley
kbeas110@gmail.com
Madrid, Spain

After graduation I plan to teach English in Madrid, Spain, for a year or more.

Eventually, I’d like to attend graduate school for either international relations or peace and conflict resolution in Israel or Europe.

Although, as a School of Public and Environmental Affairs student, my studies have centered mainly on government, working at WTS throughout these four years has been a valuable opportunity for pursuing, improving and sharing my love of language with others.

It has improved my interpersonal skills, made me more patient and empathetic, and revealed to me my passion for working with English language learners.

Through WTS I’ve formed friendships and learned so much from so many different types of people: fellow peer tutors, graduate tutors, tutees and professional staff members.

I’ve been exposed to lab reports, sociological analyses, Ph.D. research proposals and a slew of other material I would have never been exposed to had I not been a tutor.

I will always love WTS and look back on these years with fondness and gratitude!

Ingrid Feustel
ingrid.feustel@gmail.com
The Philippines

Working at WTS has been the most instructive, rewarding and fun part of my time at IU.

I learned about working with students of different levels, not to mention got a little taste of lots of interesting classes I never would have taken myself.

After graduation I will be moving to the Philippines to continue working with students and non-native speakers of English as a Literacy and Fluency teacher through the Peace Corps.

I know I am going to miss all of my brilliant WTS friends, but everything I learned from them will help me through this adventure!

After my service, I hope to attend graduate school in the United States.
I have been applying for graduate schools and assistantship positions in student affairs.

WTS gave me a lot to talk about in my interviews: from my style of communication to how I deliver bad news and why I am interested in higher education.

I do not know for sure where I am going yet. One option is attending IUPUI for an M.A. in higher education and student affairs.

I would work as an academic advisor for University Division students with IUPUI’s Academic and Career Support Services.

My other option is to attend Bowling Green State University. I would get an M.A. in college student personnel and work as a career adviser for undergraduates in the business college.

I plan to attend Stanford for a M.S. in human and medical genetics to become a genetic counselor.

Although I will be focusing primarily on scientific research, I know the language and communication skills I have developed at WTS will be valuable as I continue my education.

Working at WTS has not only helped me refine my English skills and given me a more insightful look at my own and others’ writing, but it has taught me how to engage with and relate to many students I would have never met outside of WTS.

I have made lifelong friendships and unforgettable memories over the past three years as part of WTS, and I am so grateful to have been given the opportunity to be part of such a spectacular group of people.
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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.

Thanks!
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

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