

# Tutor Talk

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 1

SPRING 2014

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Learning Center Welcomes New Coordinator Tiffany Peters	1
Learning Center Usage	1
Tutor and SI Leader Superstars	2-3
Meet the Staff: Academic Advisor Ann Lee	4
Service Projects	5
Learning Center Coordinators Present at the NCLCA Annual Conference	5
Staff Publications	6
Professional Development for Tutors	6
Learning Center Bids Farewell to Graduate Assistant Gunnar Ingolfsson	7
Clients Speak Up: Learning Center Evaluations Reflect Excellence	8
Contacts and Credentials	8

## Learning Center Welcomes New Coordinator Tiffany Peters



**Tiffany Peters, Success Strategies and Writing & Languages Tutoring Coordinator**

This October I joined the Learning Center as the tutoring coordinator for the Success Strategies and Writing and Languages Desk. I earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and History, as well as a Master's degree in Sport Administration from Ball State University. Prior to joining the Learning Center, I served as an academic coordinator for Student Athlete Support Services.

Having spent five years in University College I developed a profound appreciation for the Learning Center. Now as a part of the Learning Center team, I see first-hand the care and dedication of tutors, graduate assistants, coordinators, and support staff to deliver academic assistance to Ball State students.

In my short time with the Learning Center, I have been impressed by the professionalism and enthusiasm of our tutors. The positive and collaborative environment of the Learning Center is shaped by the energy and commitment to academic success that our tutors bring to work daily.

As coordinator, I endeavor to inspire and engage tutors and students in a meaningful academic experience. My goal is to continue the quality of tutoring and services provided by the Success Strategies and Writing and Languages Desk through campus collaboration, innovative practice, and commitment to tutor and graduate assistant development.

Over the past few months I have had the pleasure to partner with Disability Services to provide test accommodations for students with disabili-

ties. I hope to further engage with students and faculty that utilize the testing center to foster an environment of integrity and access.

In addition to my professional role, I am a doctoral student in the Adult, Higher, and Community Education program. With a major in Higher Education, and a cognate in Sport Administration, my research interests include the relationship between higher education and intercollegiate athletics.

Above all, I am excited to be a part of the Learning Center, and anticipate many more positive opportunities to serve Ball State students as coordinator for Success Strategies and Writing and Languages.

## Learning Center Usage: August 2013-March 2014

Science and Humanities Tutoring:	5,324 visits
Math and Business Tutoring::	4,312 visits
Success Strategies Tutoring:	845 visits
Writing and Languages Tutoring:	1,745 visits
Test Proctoring:	1,471 tests administered
Supplemental Instruction:	8,695 visits

### What does the Learning Center offer?

- Free tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, and a variety of workshops for all BSU students
- The opportunity for students to collaborate with a peer trained in academic support services in a relaxed, informal learning environment

# Tutor and SI Leader Superstars

Kristal All



*“It is really great to receive their gratitude and kind remarks about what I do. I am glad to know that I have made a difference by helping them learn.”*

Mark Rose



Sarah Behm



**Kristal All**, a junior from Berne, Indiana, is a Music History 100 SI leader. She has served in this position for two semesters, and coordinator Jennifer Haley notes that she has done a wonderful job working with large numbers of students in her study sessions. “Kristal has done a fantastic job for the past two semesters. Her study sessions often draw quite a few students, and she is highly skilled at adapting her instruction and materials to the size of the group. As an education major, she is attuned to the needs of the students and creates supple-

mental materials that are not only useful but creative and engaging as well.”

Kristal was drawn to this position because she performed so well in MUHI 100 and believed it was a great opportunity to share her knowledge with other students taking this challenging core course.

She has experienced great success: “I have gotten wonderful feedback from many of the students who come to my SI sessions. My sessions help prepare them for upcoming assign-

ments, quizzes, tests, and anything else we talked about in class. All of the students who gave me feedback told me how much my sessions helped them understand more and do well in the class. It is really great to receive their gratitude and kind remarks about what I do. I am glad to know that I have made a difference by helping them learn.”

Kristal is a Secondary English Education major who plans to teach high school English.

**Mark Rose**, a senior from Fort Wayne, Indiana, is a Secondary Mathematics Education major at the Math and Business Desk. He has been tutoring math, economics, and physics for the past three semesters. He applied for a tutoring position because he enjoyed teaching math and he wanted to improve his teaching skills for his future career.

Coordinator Gary Ritz notes that “Mark has been a great component of the Math and Business Desk over the last few years. He has always had a strong willingness to help in numerous classes (he can tutor eleven courses).

With his strong background in mathematics and his great desire to teach and help others, he was always one of our most highly-demanded tutors by clients because he was patient and tried different ways to convey the materials to clients. He was always reliable and will make a great math teacher for a school corporation in Indiana.”

Mark identifies his biggest success story as a time when he was tutoring a student who is legally blind. “It was a big challenge for me because I am a person who tends to teach math by showing a number of

visual or graphical representations, which he couldn't see. It ended up being a unique challenge the whole semester, and helped me improve my word choices and not rely on my visual aids as a crutch. It was frustrating at times because I felt like I was not doing as good of a job as normal, but I must have been doing something right because he went from having at 72% on his first test to a 98% on his last test. This taught me that sometimes even when you think you might not be doing the best job, you can still be making a huge difference.”

**Sarah Behm**, a junior from Dayton, Ohio, is a Psychology tutor at the Science and Humanities Desk. Sarah has served as a tutor for four semesters. She was attracted to this position because she loves tutoring and she loves helping people.

Coordinator Jennifer Haley comments that Sarah is a reliable, flexible, professional tutor who really cares about the

students she helps. “Sarah may be making the move to working as a Supplemental Instruction leader in the future, and in whatever role she chooses, her knowledge in her content area and her calm, clear communication will benefit her students.”

Sarah's favorite moment of tutoring came when a client told her that “they loved

and preferred my tutoring sessions over attending their classes because I explained the material way better than their professor did.”

Sarah, who majors in Psychology and minors in French and Criminal Justice, is planning to attend graduate school to earn her Master's Degree.

Thank you for your hard work, Sarah!

# Tutor and SI Leader Superstars, cont.

**Corey Christner**, a senior from Bunker Hill, Indiana, is an Economics major who has been working at the Math and Business Desk for three semesters. Corey was initially attracted to the position because it was convenient job on campus, but soon realized that working as a tutor allowed him to understand the subjects while helping other students. Coordinator Gary Ritz comments that Corey is a great role model and asset to the Math and Business Desk: "He was always willing to help other tutors learn how to approach and tutor certain business courses. He would always have a full docket of clients each semester as he really focused on building rapport with his clients and making his clients feel comfortable. Over his time working at the Learning Center, Corey greatly improved his communication skills and knowledge of his subject which will hopefully continue along his career path." Corey has his share of success stories: "I had a student who struggled to grasp concepts at the beginning of the semester, but she persisted and came in every week with questions and problems. After doing so for several weeks in a row, she got 100% on her quizzes. It's awesome to be around other students with a passion to learn." After graduation, Corey plans to move home to work at the local community bank and help his dad with the family farm.

**Becca Byers**, who graduated from Ball State this past fall, is from Fort Wayne. She worked as a Spanish tutor at the Core Desk and Writing and Languages Desk. Becca had quite a bit of informal tutoring experience before she was hired by the Learning Center: "As a Spanish major, I was always helping friends with their Spanish classes, so I figured I may as well offer help to everyone (and get paid for it!). As I continue with my upper-level courses, tutoring the lower levels helps me stay fresh with grammar, and I actually continue to learn. If there is a student who struggles with a concept I'm not as familiar with, I conquer the concept with them, and then I can explain it to other students." Becca excelled in creating study materials for her students: "Using an example text from the course textbook, I created listening questions for a practice listening quiz (because nobody likes listening portions of exams). I explained some tips for listening quizzes in general and then read the text so the student could practice. During the next session, the student told me that the practice helped, and he felt better during the exam." Becca's goal is to travel on a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship to teach English in a Spanish-speaking country. Coordinator Tiffany Peters notes that "Becca was nominated by the Writing and Languages graduate assistants for her performance at the desk this fall. Becca graduated this fall, and we wish her the best of luck!"

Corey  
Christner



Becca  
Byers



*Thank you to all of our fantastic tutors and SI leaders! You are truly making a difference in the academic lives of our students.*

**Kelsey Branch**, a senior from Danville, Indiana, is a Success Strategies tutor specializing in CASA, Praxis II (Elementary and Special Education), and Pearson Core Pedagogy tests. She was attracted to the tutoring position because two of her roommates were also tutors and found their job very rewarding and enjoyable. Kelsey has had many successes in her work with students over the past four semesters: "I feel that every client I work with is a success story. Ultimately, my goal is to get them to pass these standardized tests. If they end their sessions with me, it means that they have been successful in passing the test or at least a portion of the test. Another goal is to build their confidence in themselves and their abilities. Most of the clients I see have had a bad teacher or bad instruction along the way and they have lost their confidence. Another reason they have lost their confidence, is due to not passing the test previously. Through my sessions, I help clients to realize that they can pass this test and they have the skills and knowledge necessary."

"One client in particular had taken the Social Studies portion of the Praxis II for Elementary Education majors two times already and was unable to pass. During our sessions, we worked on building her knowledge in addition to building her confidence in her abilities."

A couple of weeks before she was supposed to take her exam for the third time, she started worrying and wanted to change her exam time to a month later. I assured her that she was ready. After she took the test, she sent me an email telling me how much she appreciated me helping her to build her confidence and how she felt that it ultimately helped her to pass the test."

Kelsey, a major in Special Education with Intense Interventions, will be graduating in December after student teaching in Avon Community Schools. Her ideal teaching position would be in classroom working with students with severe emotional disabilities. She also hopes to continue volunteering with the Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

Tiffany Peters comments that Kelsey has been a highly valued and high-achieving tutor at the Success Strategies Desk. "She dove into the challenge of tutoring for a new standardized exam, and has been integral in gathering and utilizing resources. Her clients consistently share positive feedback about their tutoring sessions with Kelsey. Her positive attitude and work ethic are unparalleled."

Kelsey  
Branch



# Meet the Staff: Ann Lee, Academic Advisor and Learning Center Advisory Board Member



I have a Bachelor of Science Degree in Public Relations and a Master of Arts Degree in Student Affairs Administration in Higher Education from Ball State University. I have been working as a Freshman Academic Advisor since August 2004.

I think the Learning Center is a wonderful resource for students. I frequently hear from my freshmen students that they didn't have to study in high school. They quickly learn that the same strategy won't work in college. I encourage those students to use the Learning Center to help them improve their study skills through the Success Strategies area, which can assist students with time management, reading comprehension, note taking, and test taking.

I also encourage my students to get assistance from the Learning Center for specific subjects that they might be struggling with. I am so thankful that we have a wonderful resource like the Learning Center available to help our students be successful in college.

I was honored to be asked to serve on the Learning Center Advisory Board. It has given me the opportunity to hear about the work that the Learning Center is doing and offer input from my perspective as an Academic Advisor and to hear from other faculty and staff members on campus. We all share the common goal of wanting to help our students be the best that they can be.



# Learning Center Students Active in Service Projects



Michelle Poteet, a tutor at the Math and Business Desk in the Learning Center, organized a fundraiser in the Learning Center this spring. In anticipation of a Spring Break mission trip to Jamaica, Michelle conducted a shoe drive.

“The shoes we collect will be given to people in Jamaica who don't have any shoes at all or shoes in very poor condition. The terrain in the area is very rocky, so shoes with soles are important.

Having a pair of shoes means that children can go to school and adults can go to work!”

A total of 51 pairs of shoes were

collected. The Front Desk (reception area) collected the most shoes in this friendly competition.

Additional service projects included a collection organized by Science and Humanities tutor Sarah Hummel for school supplies for Teach for America, an organization of leaders who work to ensure that kids growing up in poverty get an excellent education; and a collection of change for the Penny Wars to raise money for Dance Marathon, which benefits Riley Children's Hospital, organized by Science and Humanities tutor Kimberly Forsythe.

# Learning Center Coordinators Present at National Conference in Charleston

You are faced with a group of expectant (and sometimes skeptical) tutors for a training session...now what? How can you make this training engaging, relevant, interactive, and applicable to tutoring practice, all within sixty minutes?

The Learning Center coordinators headed to Charleston, South Carolina to the National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA) Annual Conference to address just this question in October. Training plans and materials were shared, all of which fit into the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) training requirements. CRLA is the organization that certifies the Ball State Learning Center's tutor training program.

As the focus of the NCLCA conference is on the exchange of ideas and materials for programming, training, and assessment, the coordinators designed a presentation that encouraged a discussion about developing a cross-curricular

exchange of ideas and a sense of camaraderie in the Learning Center. Ideas for fun and interactive in-service activities on such topics as emergency tutoring situations, tutoring students with disabilities, tutor toolbox, reading rate and note-taking, and resume building were shared with session participants.

The session was well-attended and the evaluations were outstanding. The con-

ference allows the coordinators to make valuable connections with colleagues around the nation.

Former coordinator Jackie Harris and current Learning Center graduate assistant Rena Dosset also presented at the conference.



*Learning is finding out what we already know. Doing is demonstrating that you know it. Teaching is reminding others that they know just as well as you. You are all learners, doers, and teachers.*

*~Richard Bach*

## Staff Publications

### **Jennifer Haley:**

Haley, J. (2013). Quitters: The epic exodus of fall 2013. The NCLCA Newsletter, Fall 2013, 11-12.

### **Tiffany Peters:**

Johnson, J. E., Harris, J. R., & Peters, T. M. (2013). Tutor use by student-athletes: An exploratory analysis. The Learning Assistance Review, 18, 35-50.

Peters, T. M. (2013). Academically underprepared student-athletes: A dilemma in higher education. Indiana AHPERD Journal, 42, 33-37.

### **Gary Ritz:**

Ritz, G., Heggen, A., Ericson, K., & Harris, J. (2013). Transition Programs for Student Veterans. The Journal of College Orientation and Transition, 21(1), 65-78.

## Professional Development for Tutors



The Learning Center tutor training program is certified by a national organization, the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA). As part of this rigorous training, the coordinators arrange for eight in-service training sessions each year. Tutors and SI leaders are invited to attend to learn how to provide more effective academic assistance to their fellow students.

This year, the topics addressed such issues as helping freshmen transition to college, case studies of difficult situations with clients, tips on improving note-taking and reading rates, tutor toolbox of general strategies, developing study guides with your clients, tutoring student athletes, maintaining a healthy, stress-free life, and including Learning Center experience on resumes.

# Learning Center Bids Farewell to Long-Standing Graduate Assistant Gunnar Ingolfsson



Gunnar Ingolfsson, a Ph.D. student in Counseling Psychology who hails from Iceland, has been a fixture in the Learning Center at the Science and Humanities Desk for eight semesters. He began his tenure here in the spring semester of 2008, took a break for a few years to teach in the Counseling Psychology Department, and returned to the Learning Center in the fall semester of 2011.

Gunnar's duties have included scheduling and interviewing clients, supervising and evaluating tutors, revising materials used for assessment, serving on the Learning Center Advisory Board, participating in fundraisers, and organizing social activities. He also tutors several psychology, counseling psychology, sociology, and statistics courses among others.

"Every moment i have spent at the LC has been meaningful and the personal connections i have made over the years have been spectacular. Memorable moments include times when the clients are clearly successful in their educational endeavors and/or appreciative of their roles as students. In addition, evaluation of tutors that desire feedback and are immersed in their learning experience is something i never get enough of. My work with students with disabilities has been very powerful for me. A great and humbling learning experience that provides me a unique aspect of my own reality, shining a light on the massive unearned privileges i have."

Gunnar is currently working on the final stages of his Ph.D. degree, which includes completion of his dissertation and a year-long internship at counseling center at the University of Maine. After his internship, he plans to return to Iceland to begin private practice as a psychologist. He is also invested in community work: "i also intend to do grassroots activism - work on establishing a more close knit community in Iceland; breaking down barriers people have and establishing respect and trust."

Gunnar has been an extraordinary tutor, graduate assistant, student activist and supporter of many groups on campus including the Social Justice League, for which he is the founding member. He served as president for three years and participated as a member for an additional three years in various roles, including participation and development of over 30 projects. He has also served as a member of Men of Color, Black Student Association, Caribbean Student Association, Feminists for Action, Spectrum, the Multicultural Center, and the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies.

His email signature defines him well: "i will use i instead of capital I to protest the emphasis on one individual. i will also use We instead of we to suggest that We are more important together than i alone."

## Staff

### Jennifer Haley

Science and Humanities Tutoring Coordinator  
Supplemental Instruction Coordinator  
765-285-1008  
jhaley@bsu.edu

### Tiffany Peters

Success Strategies Coordinator  
Writing & Languages Tutoring Coordinator  
765-285-8107  
tmpeters@bsu.edu

### Gary Ritz

Director  
Math and Business Tutoring Coordinator  
765-285-5497  
garitz@bsu.edu

Tutors are certified by the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA), providing a national standard for skills, training, and recognition for successful work.

SI Leaders are trained according to the rules and procedures of the International Center for Supplemental Instruction.

The Learning Center is certified by the National Association for Developmental Education (NADE), an organization that recognizes programs that meet or exceed the criteria of good practices as defined by the professional research and literature of the field.



## Clients Speak Up: Learning Center Evaluations Reflect Excellence

Tutors and coordinators are often on the receiving end of positive words and gratitude from students every day, but to really understand the effectiveness of our services and the ways in which we can improve, the Learning Center coordinators distribute a client satisfaction survey each semester.

This spring, 353 clients responded during a two-week window. Here is a summary of the results!

The majority of students sought tutoring to ask questions about specific portions of their course material and to discuss and be quizzed on some of the concepts they are learning. 99.4% of clients felt their tutor was knowledgeable about all of the content and worked with them to find answers; 97.7% reported that their tutor not only answered questions but asked questions and engaged the client in discussion; 99.4% felt that their tutor made them feel comfortable and welcome. 98.6% responded that their tutor used appropriate strategies, and 97.5% reported that their tutor worked with them to assess needs and goals. Perhaps most critically, 96% of clients felt that "I can now answer questions about the material in my own words, write on my own, and/or work the problems on my own" after attending tutoring.

Clients were given the opportunity to provide suggestions to the Learning Center, and many of them gave a suggestion that we hear all of the time: **HIRE MORE TUTORS!** Due to budget constraints, we are not able to accommodate all tutoring requests or increase our staff, but we certainly appreciate that the imperative is there and strive to meet our students' needs as best as we can.

Other statements from clients allowed our tutors to see just how much they are appreciated: **"The tutoring and service are superb. My tutor is great at making the experience fun, comfortable, and fruitful."** **"After coming to tutoring I received my first A on my test! It really helps!"** **"These tutoring sessions have helped me tremendously! I will definitely come back. I feel more confident in taking this test."** **"I'm on academic probation and this semester everything is going much smoother. My grades have improved because of the Learning Center. Thanks!"** **"Very useful and understanding. I like that they are people who do not judge. Also people with disabilities don't feel singled out."** **"My tutor was very kind and patient with me while I explained what I was struggling with. She offered great tips and advice I can use in the future."**