



WriteAway
writing help ... online

Actions & Achievements 2012



Actions & Achievements

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Institution photographs courtesy of library.

Cover photograph courtesy of University of British Columbia.

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Chapman Learning Commons, University of British Columbia

Courtesy of UBC Library

1. Message from the Chair

Collaborative online tutoring in British Columbia and Canada just took a giant step forward with the recent launch of the 2013 WriteAway Spring Pilot. WriteAway brings participating BC institutions together to offer students access to writing help online – meeting student needs for support wherever they are, whenever they need it.

With support from BCcampus and the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre (IKBLC), and administrative coordination by the BC Electronic Library Network (BC ELN), WriteAway grew throughout 2012 from concept to a fully formed, ready-to-access service. Since our last report, a number of milestones were met:

- The Concept Committee chose eTutoring, an innovative technology tool developed by the Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium (CTDLC), as the software platform for WriteAway.
- A four-week proof of concept trial was conducted in the summer of 2012; feedback from this experience informed preparation for the pilot.
- A rigorous Privacy Impact Assessment review process was conducted, involving several departments in government and the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.
- The University of British Columbia joined established early adopter sites College of the Rockies, Douglas College, Kwantlen Polytechnic University and Simon Fraser University, signaling a building momentum as this flagship online tutoring service becomes operational.

As WriteAway grows into a stable service, a new advisory subcommittee will soon be struck to oversee its operations. The eTutoring BC Concept Committee has replaced the WriteAway Concept Committee and will guide the development of collaborative online tutoring services within the BC post-secondary sector (for more information on this evolution in governance, see Appendix 2).

The groundwork laid in 2012 is a foundation for the 2013 WriteAway pilot. WriteAway will also function as a proof of concept for future collaborative online tutoring services in the province.

I am eager to see where the momentum will take us in 2013!



Elaine Fairey
Chair, eTutoring BC
Concept Committee
AUL Student and Research
Services
Simon Fraser University

2. Multiple Benefits to the Sector

Through WriteAway:

- Stronger writing skills enable students to excel in their coursework and in the workplace, increasing student satisfaction and retention
- Distance learners and those who prefer to complete their studies online benefit from the convenience of virtual support
- Collaborating institutions benefit from shared infrastructure, extended service hours, increased expertise, equity of service, and lower costs

Virtual writing support is just the “tip of the iceberg”; WriteAway will serve as an important proof of concept for future collaborative online tutoring services in BC.

Writing: an Essential Skill in Education and the Workforce

Writing is an essential skill for academic growth and achievement. With guidance from qualified tutors, students using WriteAway become stronger writers, leading to higher rates of graduation.

Making BC a Destination of Choice

International students struggling to meet post-secondary writing requirements are particularly vulnerable, and may need extra bolstering. WriteAway can play an important role in supporting students for whom English is an additional language. And, as an innovative service offered only in British Columbia, WriteAway contributes to making BC a destination of choice for students from Canada and abroad.

83% of employers noted that writing is a key skill they sought in new job hires.

- *Business Council of British Columbia's 2010 survey
What Are BC Employers Looking For?*

Expanding the Virtual Learning Commons

WriteAway joins an expanding suite of online collaborative services aimed at supporting learners throughout their studies as part of a “virtual learning commons”. Online availability of educational support meets the needs of distance learners, those who prefer learning online, and those who juggle work and family obligations that prevent them from visiting traditional on-site learning support points.

“About two thirds of UBC’s students are commuters, and many of them have schedules that make accessing UBC’s on-site Writing Centre difficult. WriteAway will help to ensure that all students, regardless of their schedule or location, will be able to have equal access to the services that our tutors provide.”

-*Meghan Aube,
Writing Centre Program Leader at UBC*

The Power of Collaboration

Collaboration extends writing support services far beyond what most institutions could offer alone. Learners benefit from extended hours of service, access to more tutors, and equity of services across institutions. Institutions benefit from time and cost savings afforded by central coordination and support. Further institutional benefits include shared expertise and knowledge, and the opportunity to engage in the use of innovative educational support technology.

3. Actions & Achievements in 2012

Throughout 2012 the WriteAway service was formalized, tested, assessed, and further developed to ensure a successful implementation.

Software Selection

The WriteAway Concept Committee chose eTutoring as the WriteAway software platform. The decision followed an in-depth evaluation and an extensive community engagement process. The platform was developed by the Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium (CTDLC), and is used by other statewide consortia in the United States. The BC WriteAway collective is the first consortium to introduce this innovative technology to Canada.

WriteAway is the first Canadian collaborative to join the eTutoring “family”, which already encompasses 3 US consortia:
Northeast eTutoring Consortium
Northwest eTutoring Consortium
Ohio eTutoring Collaborative

Proof of Concept Trial

A four-week proof of concept trial of WriteAway was conducted from July 16th to August 10th. Four pilot sites participated: College of the Rockies, Douglas College, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, and Simon Fraser University. During this time tutors responded to 39 writing submissions, and student satisfaction was high.

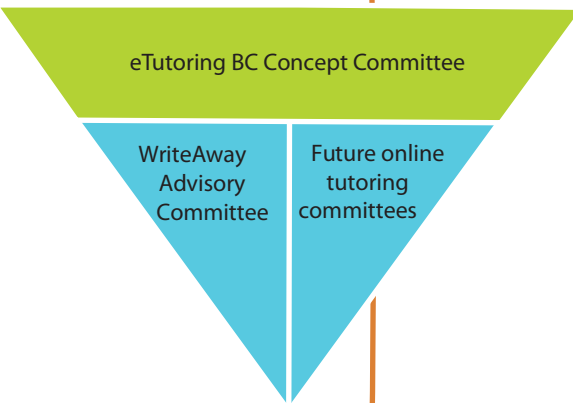
Positive student feedback for WriteAway:
“Very quick response - Professional and friendly tutor - Helpful input”
“I really appreciate all your help. I was wondering about my paragraph, but your comment is very useful to get to my goals. Thank you [for] your advise! :)”

Privacy Impact Assessment

BCcampus took the lead on a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) for the eTutoring project, of which WriteAway is one component. Assembling the PIA was an extensive process for BCcampus, involving several departments in government and the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and took several months to complete. Undergoing this process has laid the groundwork for additional online tutoring services in BC.

Evolving Governance

With a WriteAway pilot underway, a soon-to-be-formed WriteAway Advisory Committee will lead further development of the project. As a result of this transfer, the Concept Subcommittee, now named the eTutoring BC Concept Committee, will return to its foundational goal of exploring the implementation of a broad range of online tutoring services in BC at a system level. The WriteAway Advisory Committee will report to the eTutoring BC Concept Committee. For more information on this evolution in governance, please see Appendix 2.



Building Critical Infrastructure

The WriteAway Administrative Centre, in cooperation with service partners and participating institutions, has developed critical infrastructure in preparation for a 2013 WriteAway implementation. Institutional participation documents, a spring staffing model, communication channels, and student and tutor support tools are just some examples of the key pieces of infrastructure that were developed over the past year.

More Than a Sum of its Parts

Following the BCcampus conceptual model, WriteAway is a collaborative and shared service for the province.

WriteAway maximizes support for learners in the province by leveraging resources and writing community expertise. By joining a collaborative service, **participating institutions are able to offer important educational support to their students – far beyond what most could offer alone.** Centralized program coordination enables the service to run efficiently and cost-effectively.

When multiple institutions share software, infrastructure, and coordination, costs are reduced across the collaborative.

WriteAway is able to run seamlessly across several institutions thanks to the shared technical infrastructure that has been established over the past year. Participating institutions have the added benefit of engaging with innovative educational support technology in a supported, locally hosted environment.



4. Essential Partners

Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, University of British Columbia

The Irving K. Barber Learning Centre (IKBLC) brings a strong spirit of collaboration and focus on community engagement to the WriteAway project. By contributing financial support for WriteAway and by sitting on the eTutoring BC Concept Committee, IKBLC is fostering a shared vision of providing superior learning opportunities to students at large and small institutions, in both urban and rural settings.



BCcampus

BCcampus provides funding for Shared Services and Collaborative Programs that provide system benefits, support institutional needs, and reduce costs. By facilitating services that leverage technology and expertise across the post-secondary sector, BCcampus ensures that more institutions, and thus more students, reap the rewards. BCcampus' continued support – both financial and technical – for WriteAway will ensure that this proof of concept project comes to fruition.



BC Electronic Library Network

In 2011, BC ELN was invited to act as the Administrative Centre for the WriteAway project. BC ELN has become a sought-after organization to provide administrative and program management services for key collaborations in the province. BC ELN brings a solid foundation of expertise, infrastructure, and trust within the post-secondary sector, making it the best choice to administratively host WriteAway.



Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium

The Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium (CTDLC) developed the eTutoring platform, which was chosen for WriteAway. CTDLC has played a vital partnership role in WriteAway by providing training and technical support.



Early Adopters

WriteAway has been a success thus far thanks to the support of its early adopter sites. The involvement of a wide range of institutions – small and large, rural and urban – demonstrates the benefits of WriteAway in a number of different contexts.

Participating sites as of December 31, 2012:

- College of the Rockies
- Douglas College
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Simon Fraser University
- University of British Columbia



5. Foundations for the Future

WriteAway's strong foundation will serve as a base for online tutor support across many other subjects and skills. In 2013, the eTutoring BC Concept Committee, in collaboration with service partners, will continue to solidify this foundation. The service will expand to include more institutions, more hours of availability, and synchronous help. Goals for 2013 include:

- **Building Stronger Ties in the Community**
Additional institutions will be invited to join this unique service, expanding the scope of support available across the province. Members of the WriteAway community are slated to share news about the project at upcoming provincial and national conferences.
- **Opening the Door Wider for Students**
As more institutions join and staffing levels increase, the service will be opened up to more students. The goal is to make WriteAway available to all students at all participating institutions.
- **Introducing Live One-on-one Tutoring**
Live one-on-one tutoring (synchronous tutoring) will be explored in the coming year. Appropriate staffing models will be developed so that students can access synchronous and asynchronous services.
- **Striving for Best Practices**
At each stage of implementation, WriteAway will be evaluated from a number of perspectives. In the spirit of transparency, information about WriteAway progress will continue to be shared with the wider community.
- **Expanding Student Support**
As online writing support becomes established through WriteAway, the eTutoring BC Concept Committee will be exploring other academic subjects and skills for collaborative online tutoring.



Appendix 1 – Financials

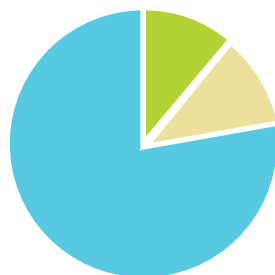
WriteAway Expenditure Summary 2012/2013

Projected

Revenues	
BCcampus Support	35,000.00
Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, UBC 2012/13 Support	5,000.00
Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, UBC 2011/12 Carryforward <i>(from total of \$10,000)</i>	5,000.00
Total	45,000.00
Expenditures	
Administrative Coordination & Support (3 days per week)	26,006.87
Platform support (Cold Fusion license, Adobe Connect instance, etc.)	17,500.00
Governance/Administration/Communication (Meetings, reports, teleconferences, etc.)	677.63
Technology infrastructure (Domain & website hosting, etc.)	815.50
Total	45,000.00

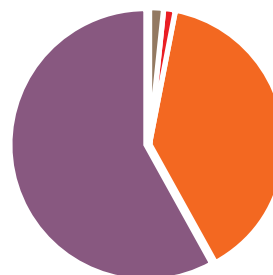
Canadian dollars

Revenue



- BCcampus
- Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, UBC 2012/13
- Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, UBC Carryforward

Expenditure



- Administrative Coordination and Support
- Platform Support
- Governance/Administration/Communication
- Technology Infrastructure



Douglas College Library

Appendix 2 – Governance

The eTutoring BC Concept Committee

The eTutoring BC Concept Committee was formed in September 2012 to guide the development of collaborative online tutoring services within the BC post-secondary sector. This Committee replaces the WriteAway Concept Committee, which managed the WriteAway project from concept to implementation. Now in a pilot phase, WriteAway will be overseen by a separate advisory subcommittee. This subcommittee, along with other subject advisory subcommittees that are yet to be formed, will report to the eTutoring BC Concept Committee.

The Committee is composed of representatives from post-secondary institutions that have expressed interest in the project, including early adopter sites. In addition, the committee has representatives from BCcampus, the BC Electronic Library Network (BC ELN), and the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, UBC (IKBLC).

Key Concept Committee objectives:

- Leading in the formation of a multi-institution collaborative offering online tutoring services for a range of subjects (e.g. Writing, Math, Biology)
- Providing governance for subject advisory subcommittees (e.g. the WriteAway Advisory Committee)
- Communicating and promoting the development of collaborative online tutoring services to the post-secondary community
- Advocating for collaboration in the provision of subject support services within the provincial post-secondary sector
- Ensuring that constituents' needs are represented and considered in planning and decision-making

eTutoring BC Concept Committee Membership

as of 2012

Tim Atkinson, Vancouver Community College

Lyn Benn, Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Anita Cocchia, BC Electronic Library Network

Elaine Fairey, Simon Fraser University - Chair

Simon Neame, Irving K. Barber Learning Centre, University of British Columbia

Lawrence Parisotto, BCcampus

Shahida Rashid, College of the Rockies

Debbie Schachter, Douglas College

WriteAway Technical Implementation Team

as of 2012

Lauri Aesoph,
BCcampus

Carolyn Caggiano,
CTDLC

Kevin Corcoran,
CTDLC

Frank Fucile,
BCcampus

Tejas Gandhi,
CTDLC

Dan Henigman,
BCcampus

Leah Hopton,
BC ELN

Sunni Nishimura,
BC ELN

Lawrence Parisotto,
BCcampus

Mark Quigley,
CTDLC

Carolyn Rogers,
CTDLC

WriteAway Administrative Centre

as of 2012

Leah Hopton,
Project Support
Sunni Nishimura,
Coordinator



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