

WriteAway Online Tutoring Actions & Achievements 2020  
Released May 2021



## Message from the Chair

Through a year of unprecedented challenges brought on by COVID-19, WriteAway provided support for students facing the challenges of remote emergency instruction. Students relied on WriteAway's established structure for online writing support as in-person writing and learning centres were closed or limited. A record number of assignments were submitted to WriteAway — up 21% over 2019 — demonstrating a strong need for online feedback during this time. Institutions in turn increased their tutoring contributions to meet the growth in demand.

As the pandemic stretches into 2021, WriteAway will continue to provide critical support to students seeking free, fast, and friendly feedback so they can excel at their studies. Thank you to WriteAway tutors and coordinators for all the hard work during this exceptional year.

- Gregg Currie, WriteAway Advisory Committee Chair and Selkirk College Department Head, College Librarian



*Photograph 1: Gregg Currie*

## Highlights of 2020:

- **WriteAway Now Has 18 Institutions:** Alexander College is the newest institution to participate in WriteAway, joining 17 other colleges and universities across British Columbia and Alberta.
- **Tutors Responded to 6,850 Draft Assignments:** WriteAway tutors provide formative feedback on thousands of draft papers each year. 2020 student submissions were at an all-time high, showing a 21% increase over 2019.
- **The Service Added 15 Extra Days to Support Demand:** As student demand for WriteAway increased in 2020, participating institutions responded by extending the service during periods that it is typically closed, such as between semesters.
- **Participants Avoided Costs of \$362,368:** Thanks to shared licensing, staffing, administration, and governance, participating institutions collectively avoided \$362,368 in costs.

- Users Gave WriteAway High Scores for Helpfulness: WriteAway users are consistently satisfied with how helpful their WriteAway experience is. In 2020, the average rating for helpfulness was 4.65 out of 5.

## 2020 Achievements

Looking back on WriteAway's achievements despite a challenging year.

### Supported Students and Institutions

- Responded to system needs in light of COVID-19 restrictions and subsequent increase in student usage, ensuring robust continuity of service:
  - Surveyed participating institutions about online writing support needs during remote instruction
  - Lengthened the January–April semester by two weeks to accommodate extended deadlines for student writing assignments
  - Increased staffing capacity: institutions added 299 hours in January-April 2020 in response to remote emergency teaching, and as part of the COVID Contingency Plan, institutions increased tutoring hours by 10% in the May-August 2020 and September-December 2020 semesters
- Revised and updated best practices for scheduling and procedures for backlogs
- Developed “grab and go” social media promotional kits for institutions to broaden marketing of the service and reach more students

### Shared Benefits of Membership

- Reached out to six BC ELN Members that don't currently participate in WriteAway to discuss potential participation and how students can benefit from service
- Welcomed Alexander College as 18th WriteAway member

### Supported Communities of Practice

- Held regular institutional coordinator meetings to share information on supporting tutors, WriteAway promotional strategies, and resource sharing within the service
- Connected with staff at institutions across Canada and the U.S. to discuss various aspects of writing support; topics included Indigenous ways of knowing in writing, research, and scholarship and promotional best practices

- Wrote article entitled [Asynchronous Affordances: WriteAway's Pandemic Experience](#) about WriteAway's value as an online student support service during the pandemic for the Canadian Writing Centre Association

#### Did you Know?

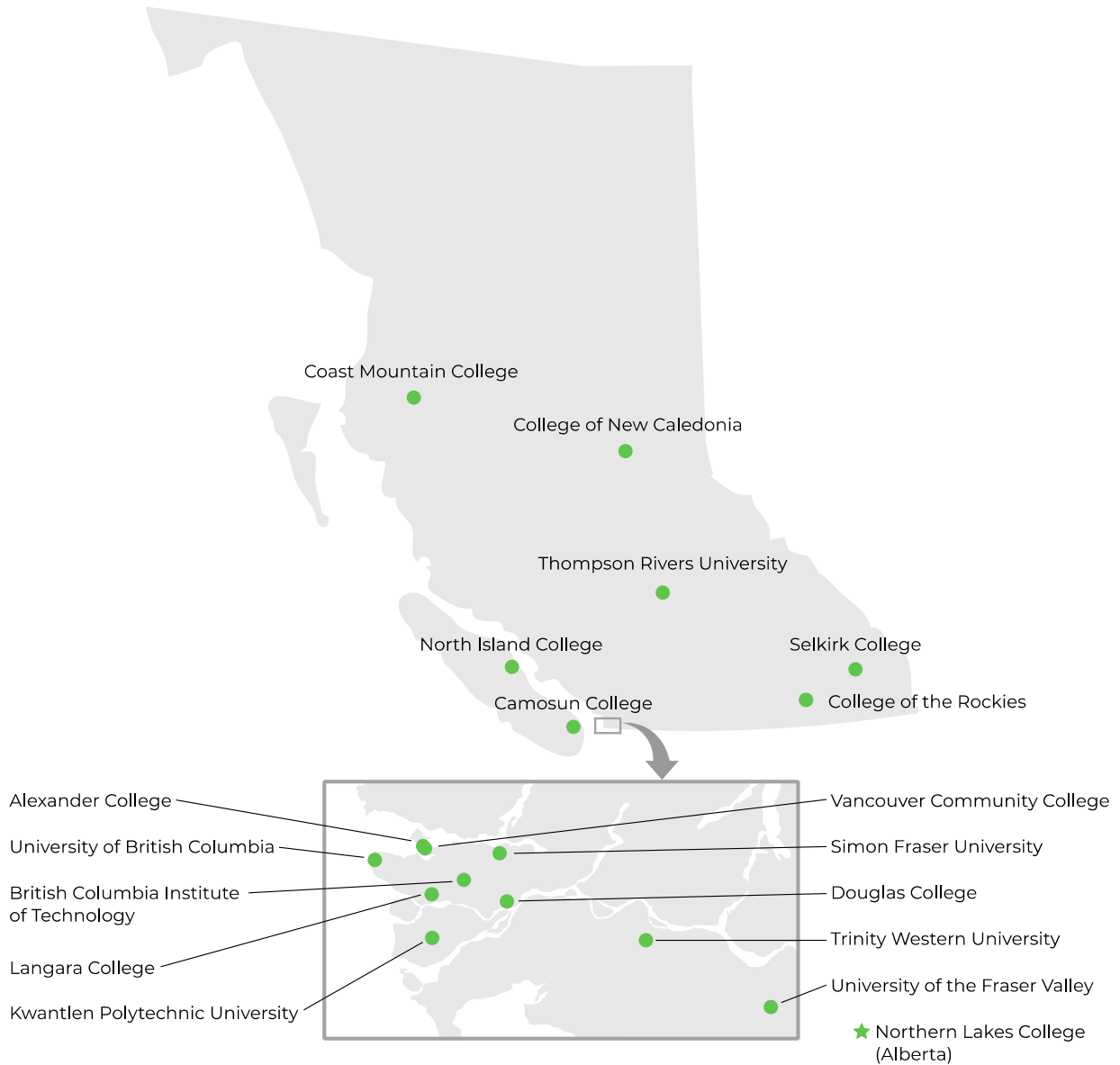
- Students in any discipline can submit a paper to WriteAway; In 2020 tutors helped students in 76 different subject areas.
- Papers get a response from tutors in a speedy 24-48 hours!
- The WriteAway Admin Centre provided training for 47 people in 2020; 74 tutors worked for WriteAway this year.

#### Participating Institutions – as of December 2020

WriteAway is British Columbia's collaborative online writing tutoring service. Undergraduate students receive feedback and strategies to improve their writing from qualified tutors. A student at any participating institution may receive feedback from a tutor housed at any other participating institution. That's the beauty of the collaborative network: institutions are able to offer so much more cooperatively than what they could alone.

- Alexander College
- British Columbia Institute of Technology
- Camosun College
- Coast Mountain College
- College of New Caledonia
- College of the Rockies
- Douglas College
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Langara College
- North Island College
- Northern Lakes College (Alberta)
- Selkirk College
- Simon Fraser University
- Thompson Rivers University
- Trinity Western University

- University of British Columbia
- University of the Fraser Valley
- Vancouver Community College



## Student Quotes:

Quote from Coast Mountain College WriteAway User:

“The feedback given was incredibly helpful, clear and very quickly delivered. I was notified of some things about my writing that I had no idea were issues. Also, the feedback was given in a very positive light, which I appreciated... Thank You!”

Quote from Trinity Western University WriteAway User:

“Thank you very much for your detailed feedback. I appreciate it tremendously! It really is very helpful to get such feedback and to use the information going forward. I especially appreciate WriteAway since COVID measures do not currently permit the use of on-campus services to help with writing.”

Quote from North Island College WriteAway User:

“I have been out of school for many years, and wondered how my writing has fared in that time. WriteAway’s comments were helpful and gave me more confidence in my writing skills.”

Quote from Thompson Rivers University WriteAway User:

“I always feel very nervous about writing. [The tutors] are very professional and they provided a lot of useful resources to me. THANK YOU!”

Quote from Langara College WriteAway User:

“Thanks for your quick reply and so many tips and useful links. I just arrived in Canada and this is my first semester in college, so only now I am learning all the rules for writing an essay in English. The rules are very different from my native language. Thanks so much for your help and your time!”

#### [Institution Spotlight: Simon Fraser University](#)

Simon Fraser University (SFU) was an early adopter of WriteAway, and has been a part of the service since its inception. We spoke with Julia Lane (photo at right), former WriteAway tutor and current Writing Services Coordinator at the SFU Student Learning Commons.



*Photograph 2: Julia Lane*

## **How has the pandemic affected writing support at SFU Student Learning Commons?**

“When the pandemic forced us to close the in-person Student Learning Commons at SFU, it was a busy time of year (March). We were very conscious to ensure that we were open and accessible to students. We closed the in-person SLC on a Friday, and by the following Tuesday we had live virtual consultations up and running. At the same time, WriteAway was like a security blanket. We had to innovate in all these other ways, but WriteAway just kept going. We were able to tell people, ‘this service hasn’t changed, we are still available.’”

## **What is the experience of working on WriteAway through the pandemic like for tutors?**

“We were lucky to have a team of very experienced WriteAway tutors as we transitioned to fully online support. But, we did have some new people go through the WriteAway training, which is excellent by the way. Even some of our extremely experienced SLC staff learned new things! Tutors see WriteAway as a way to care for other students — really care. They look for ways in their responses to reach across the virtual distance.”

## **What does SFU gain by being a member of WriteAway?**

“We gain a lot. The way I see it, we are part of WriteAway and WriteAway is part of us. There are three pillars to the writing support we offer: workshops, synchronous consultations, and asynchronous written feedback through WriteAway. Some students will touch the SLC in all three ways, others might only ever use one. Written feedback is one crucial way that we can provide support, and for some this is the very best way they can get feedback.”

### [Alexander College Tutors Share Their Thoughts](#)

Quote from Tutor Alyssa: “As a newer member of Alexander College’s Writing and Learning Centre, I was blown away to learn about WriteAway. I wish I had access to a service like this during my undergrad! Since the pandemic has pushed learning online, WriteAway is an invaluable resource for students who already have so much on their plate — it’s like an extra helping hand to take some of the pressure off during these stressful and uncertain times.”

Quote from Tutor Andrew: “WriteAway has been a super helpful service during the pandemic, especially because students feel isolated right now. Having tutors available online via WriteAway helps create a sense of security.”

Quote from Tutor Louise: “I love working for a service that gives more students access to quality support when in-person learning is on hold.”

### WriteAway Financials

<b>WriteAway Revenue</b>	<b>2019/20 Actual</b>	<b>2020/21 Projected</b>
Partner Institution Support Fee (Service & Infrastructure)	\$50,256	\$54,274
BC ELN Contribution	\$10,000	\$10,000
Miscellaneous Revenue - Includes flexible contributions, marketing, and previous year’s carryforward (2018/19 carryforward was -\$2,207)	\$-1,628	\$1,603
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$58,628</b>	<b>\$65,877</b>

<b>WriteAway Expenses</b>	<b>2019/20 Actual</b>	<b>2020/21 Projected</b>
Staffing and Coordination Infrastructure	\$48,122	\$50,986
Administration/Communication/Governance	\$1,110	\$352
Software & Technical Infrastructure	\$8,842	\$8,842
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$58,074</b>	<b>\$60,180</b>

WriteAway Revenue over Expenditure (Carryforward):

- 2019/20 Actual Carryforward: \$554
- 2020/21 Projected Carryforward: \$5,697

### A Look Ahead to 2021

- Ensure WriteAway continues to meet the needs of participating institutions and their students through the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic
- Participate in community building activities, including presentations at the Online Writing Feedback Services Symposium (OFSSS), and committee work with the Online Writing Center Association (OWCA)
- Assess current tutor response best practices based on a revised and enhanced student experience survey
- Update Advisory Committee Terms of Reference to ensure alignment with service host BC ELN and BC ELN’s other service areas

WriteAway is a service of the [BC Electronic Library Network](#) (BC ELN).



Interested in joining WriteAway or have questions about the service? Please contact the [WriteAway Administrative Centre](#).

If you have comments or feedback about this accessible PDF, please email [leahh@bceln.ca](mailto:leahh@bceln.ca). Your suggestions are welcome.