

Thesis Boot Camp comes to SFU Library

By Andrea Cameron and Nicole White.

SFU Library's Research Commons piloted its first Thesis Boot Camp in April 2013, an initiative designed to provide graduate students with the opportunity to spend dedicated time making progress on writing their dissertation or master's thesis. The initiative was modeled after similar successful programs at Queen's, the University of Guelph, and Princeton.

Scope and Participation

The Boot Camp opened with a writing process presentation by Alton Harestad, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Biological Sciences, and was attended by 130 students. Participation in the Boot Camp writing days was capped at 25 participants (pre-registered) and reached capacity within hours of registration opening. Participants originated from 19 departments and were split evenly between Master's and PhD candidates.

The Library provided a quiet working environment and offered participants writing, thesis formatting, and research support. A panel discussion, presentation by invited speaker Dr. Adrienne Burk, and short yoga breaks provided respite from blocks of intensive writing over the course of two days.

Feedback

The feedback following the event was very positive resulting in a plan to continue the program on a semester basis. Highlights included:

"This program comprehensively addresses the pitfalls graduate students encounter-- the facilitators' supportive acceptance and the caring environment are key underlying attitudes that keep anxious writers hanging in. Don't change anything."

"This was such an amazing opportunity. I think that the size of the group was perfect. [...] I would definitely do this again. Maybe I can for my Ph.D.! It



Renee McCallum, Writing Services Coordinator, SFU Student Learning Commons Photo courtesy of Gladys We.

has also made me realize that I can come to the library for support."

SFU Library Research Commons

The SFU Library Research Commons was launched in 2011 to provide specialized programs and services to graduate students. The design and development of a physical space for graduate students in the W.A.C. Bennett Library is underway with an anticipated completion of Fall 2013. Research Commons' services, including the Thesis Boot Camp, are provided through collaboration between librarians and writing services coordinators and other partners. Questions about the Boot Camp or related services can be directed to Nicole White, Head, SFU Library Research Commons, nqjertse@sfu.ca.

Nicole White is Head, Research Commons, Simon Fraser University Library.

Andrea Cameron is Assistant Head, Fraser Library, Simon Fraser University Surrey.