



UMBC TESOL Program Newsletter

Special Feature—Teaching Abroad

EDITED BY KENEISHA MURRELL

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“One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages open every door along the way.”

—Frank Smith

ESOL Office

410-455-3061

esol@umbc.edu

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Teaching English Abroad: An Interview with Mary Tabaa

This semester we're focusing on teaching English abroad. You have spent most of your career teaching stateside, but do you have any experience teaching abroad?

I taught English in Seoul for a year after completing my undergraduate degree. While in the MA program here at UMBC, I taught a two-week professional development course on Teaching Grammar at the Centro Ecuatoriano Norteamericano in Guayaquil, Ecuador. After earning my MA, I returned to Seoul to teach Methods of Teaching ESOL in a graduate certificate program in TESOL at Sookmyung Women's University (SMU).

What prompted you to choose Korea?

In my last semester of college, I attended a job fair where I saw a sign reading Teach in Asia. I had taken a year of Mandarin, and was excited about the idea of going to China. However, the recruiter only had contacts in South Korea. (I was his first, and I believe only, recruit.) I was so excited to move abroad for a year that I probably would have gone anywhere. However, I am very happy that I ended up in Seoul. I liked it so much that I returned three years later and stayed for 2.5 years!

What was your experience like in the classroom? Was there anything that surprised you?

In my first year of teaching in Seoul, I worked at an after-school institute for students in grades 3-9. Students had already put in a full day of school, so I learned a lot about keeping students actively engaged in the classroom.

When I taught at SMU, I found that it took time for students to become comfortable with a program in which they were consistently asked to give opinions and make connections to their experiences. This taught me the importance of understanding students' prior experiences and cultural expectations, giving explicit instructions, and being flexible both in the moment (i.e., adapting to the situation) and in my planning (i.e., giving choices when possible).

What were your experiences like outside of the classroom?

Ordinary activities such as grocery shopping or getting a haircut became exciting challenges in which I could test my cultural knowledge and language skills. On bad days, misunderstandings could be frustrating, but most of the time I was able to frame communication gaps as opportunities to learn.

Did you learn anything about yourself from the experience?

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Teaching Abroad with the Peace Corps

by Christopher Upchurch

In 2010, I was sent to the Republic of Panama to work as an English Teacher and Small Business Advisor with the U.S. Peace Corps. Before starting the position, I had no information about where I would be working or with whom. As everyone in the Peace Corps does, I spent three months strengthening my language skills and going through an intense training process to learn how best to work with the communities of Panama.



Panama is a very diverse country, so I honestly had no idea what to expect. At the end of the three months of training, the day finally arrived. It was announced that I would be working with the Embera people, an indigenous group native to Colombia. I was to serve as a teacher to adults for their tourism business and in the local elementary school (which had all grades – Pre-K to 6th – together at all times).

I wish that I could say that my time teaching was filled with great moments of joy and laughter, but the truth is that teaching in an area where literacy was not a reality for a large part of the community and where extreme poverty was the norm proved to be quite challenging. After all, a teacher never just teaches a language – he must navigate the complexities of culture in all its forms. While my time teaching with the Peace Corps was one of the most difficult experiences of my life, it still remains as one of the most rewarding experiences. It gave me the opportunity to live with, work with, and learn from a people that I never would have even heard of had it not been for the Peace Corps. I gained skills that have proved useful on many occasions and I did things that I could never do anywhere else: spearfishing with only a metal rod and piece of rubber, hunting in the jungle with dogs and a machete, drinking coffee immediately after the beans had been plucked off the tree, and so many others.

My advice to anyone curious about teaching abroad is to make sure you do your research. There are so many opportunities to teach abroad, and each one has a unique set of circumstances that need to be considered. The Peace Corps was the perfect starting point for me, because I had not taught full time before it. It has opened doors in so many ways to build my career as a teacher, and I am forever grateful for it. The important thing is not to worry so much about where you start. Just start and you'll learn what is best for you as you go.

Christopher Upchurch is an MA TESOL student who graduates this semester with the intent of become an adult ESOL educator. He will be teaching with the U.S. State Department's English Language Fellows Program in Guinea, Africa starting in August of this year.

The Fulbright US Student Program

by Brian Souders

For the past 18 years, I served as UMBC's lead in education abroad programs in the International Education Services Office. I got into this career by accident more than 20 years ago but it has brought me tremendous personal and professional satisfaction. One of the most rewarding parts of the job has been working with UMBC's undergraduate and graduate students with the Fulbright U.S. Student Program.

The Fulbright U.S. Student Program is a federally funded fellowship through the Bureau of Cultural and Educational Exchange in the U.S. Department of State. Funding of many programs is shared by the U.S. Department of State, the Fulbright Commissions overseas, and host country governments. I became involved in the Fulbright program not because I was a participant, but because I was asked to join an interview committee to help an applicant with her ETA application to Germany. UMBC's students now have

a strong track record in winning these internationally prestigious awards.

The Fulbright U.S. Student Program offers two types of awards. The English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program hosts recent undergraduates, as well as current and recent MA graduate students, to teach English and U.S. culture in 75 countries throughout the world. The research and study component of the Fulbright program allows current MA and doctoral students to conduct a year of research on a

topic of their own design in more than 140 countries.

Over the past four summers, I have led a series of writing workshops, called Fulbright Boot Camp, to give our students the opportunity to learn more about the application and writing processes of the key components of the application. These workshops will start in the last week of June and will continue through July and August. Held during the

evening and on weekends, so as to not interfere with work schedules, these workshops have shown their worth in the increase in the number and competitiveness of UMBC applicants.

Each year more than 11,000 U.S. recent undergraduates and current graduate students compete for approximately 2100 awards. UMBC has been very successful over the past several years since the Fulbright Boot Camp series started in 2014. This

year saw a record-breaking number of applicants, at 33, with eight of those applicants receiving this

prestigious award. Of UMBC's recipients this year, six were awarded ETA grants to Sri Lanka, Lithuania, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, South Korea, and Macedonia. Past recipients have taught English in Malaysia, Germany, Laos, Argentina, Mexico and Colombia.

Future applicants, including current TESOL MA students, as well as recent alumni, should contact me at <souders@umbc.edu> if they have any questions regarding this year's competition cycle.



Dr. Brian Souders serves as UMBC's Fulbright scholarship advisor and is a current MA TESOL student. Here he is visiting with a UMBC alumnus currently teaching English in Demak, Indonesia on a Fulbright award.

Recognitions & Recent Events



Dr. Luis Javier Pentón Herrera joined UMBC during the Fall 2017 semester. He recently earned his Ph.D. in Leadership: Reading, Language, and Literacy from Concordia University Chicago. His dissertation, entitled “Learning English as a Third Language: The Language and Literacy Experiences of Adolescent Immigrant Ixil Students in the United States” researched the linguistic and education needs of a minority population within the Hispanic diaspora in the United States, the Ixil population. In the near future, Luis plans to continue working as a literacy and language educator.

In addition, **Dr. Pentón Herrera** has accepted the role of president of Maryland TESOL for the upcoming year. He takes the baton from our own **Professor Sherry Lyons** who served as last year’s president. The ESOL Program is privileged to have professors who are leaders in the field of second language education.



Spring semester graduate, **Juan Carlos Villao**, was selected as a 2018 Teacher of Promise. Teacher of Promise is a Maryland State Department of Education program that recognizes and supports exceptional beginning teachers. This program pairs promising new teachers with award-winning teachers who can provide support for the first year of teaching.



The ESOL Program hosted a class of ESOL middle school students from **White Oak Middle School** in Silver Spring, MD. The students enjoyed a tour of the campus which ended with pizza and a Q & A on the possibilities higher education can afford. A special thank-you to ESOL Program students, Molly Hart, Bridget Simmons, and Marvin Barahona for making the visit a success. In another partnership with the school, Dr. Doaa Rashed and Ms. Farhanah Shah are developing a Creative Writing Workshop for ESOL students at White Oak. The pilot project will be taught by graduate students in the ESOL program in summer 2018. The project is funded with two grants from Maryland TESOL and the Education Department at UMBC.



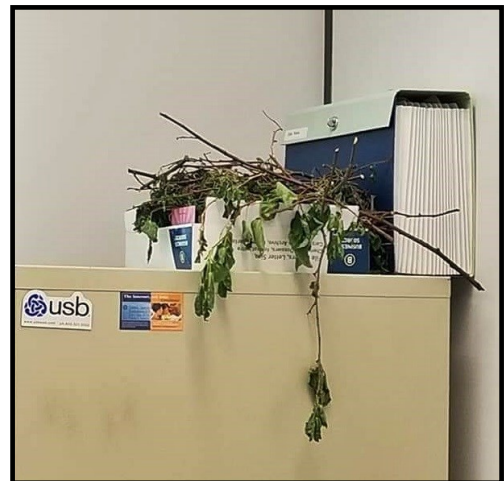
Recent graduate, **Kursten Pickup**, won first place for TESOL for her Student Learning Outcome (SLO) poster at the certification internship celebration. Her SLO project was entitled “Increasing Writing Proficiency for High School English Learners”. Kursten is currently teaching for Baltimore City Public Schools.



Dr. Doaa Rashed received the GSA Donald Creighton Outstanding Faculty Award. On an annual basis, this award honors an outstanding adviser, mentor, or professor who strives to aid graduate students in their academic and professional pursuits during their time at UMBC.



In Spring 2018, the graduate students in the EDUC 688 Methodology of Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language course hosted an after school ESOL Club at **Halethorpe Elementary School**. The graduate students developed and implemented an instructional plan to help 1st and 2nd graders improve their language proficiency focusing on literacy skills. The ESOL Club lasted for 8 weeks.



An unsuspecting, **Dr. Doaa Rashed** was greeted by an eager mother squirrel whose nest was moved into her office over the weekend. The resourceful rodent apparently wanted to get a head start on her children's English language education, intending to offer her expertise as a teacher of Squirrelese as a second language in exchange. Determined to visit the ELI upon learning that ours is a teacher preparation program, she was sorely disappointed to discover that UMBC admissions requires that all applicants be housebroken. Unwilling to be dissuaded, she and her 3 little ones were eventually escorted out by the appropriate campus personnel.

I learned that I had to find a balance between spending time alone and with others. The first time I was in Seoul, one of my roommates and I clicked right away, and I also began dating someone a few months in. When I returned a few years later, I lived alone. I could happily spend days at a time by myself, feeling free to do whatever I wanted, but then I could also feel incredibly lonely and disconnected. I had to be conscious about choosing to socialize because I did not have built-in social networks as I did at home. All of my friendships were new, which can be fun yet exhausting if you are more of an introvert.

Did it in any way shape your career choices since then?

Certainly! I shifted my focus to ESOL after that experience. I was intending to teach English Language Arts in a middle school, but after teaching English in Seoul, I found a position teaching ESOL in Baltimore County. I then decided to take an SLA course at UMBC, which led to my enrollment in the MA program.

Why would you recommend students take advantage of opportunities to teach abroad should they arise?

Teaching abroad helps us develop intercultural communication skills and lets us experience other ways of seeing and living. Working within another educational system gives us insight into different approaches to teaching and learning. In addition, time spent abroad gives us a taste of some of the linguistic and cultural challenges faced by our ESL students in the U.S.

Mary Tabaa is a member of our ESOL Program faculty and also serves as the Online/Off-Campus Coordinator.

ESOL CLUB



This spring, the ESOL club went to Indian Delight in Catonsville for a scrumptious Saturday evening meal. We also helped a few students and professors to refuel with an end-of-semester Pizza Pit Stop.

We hope you can become involved in the ESOL Club next semester. We will be looking for input as we plan future events. Interested in planning or helping?

Contact: esol@umbc.edu

CON“GRAD”ULATIONS!



NEW HORIZONS

Congratulations to our recent and former graduates settling into new positions!



Katie MacEwen Edwards (2016) - our former ESOL Program GA has been keeping busy in her new roles as a mom and the new ELC Grant Program Coordinator at Howard Community College.

Adrianna Neuenschwander (2018) - Asst. Director of Student Success, Johns Hopkins University Carey School of Business.

Alex Sheffrin (2012) - English instructor at Osaka Seikei University, Japan.

Debby Pastrana Williams (2018) - Curtis Bay Elementary School, Baltimore City.

Erica Ashton (2018) - Springhill Lake Elementary School, Prince George's County.

Michaela Haber (2018) - Northwestern High School, Prince George's County.

Spring 2018 Graduates !

Certificate Awardees:

Cierra Anoruo
Marvin Barahona
Meg Bower
Victoria Donaldson
Maggie Flannery
Yuanyuan Liu
Letizia Mahoney
David Mallek
Chelsea Massa
Ging Shamberger-Sandosky
Maria Smith
Lynn Topel
Lise Tracey
Amanda Tzan
Kristal Vines
Eleanor Welsh

Master's Graduates:

Matthew Gleason
Michaela Haber
Allison Lenetsky
Adrianna Neuenschwander
Joy Newman
Roza Pereska-Smith
Kursten Pickup
Christopher Upchurch
Juan Carlos Villao
Alyona Yazykova
Mengdi Zeng



*Please keep in touch with us as
we greatly enjoy hearing from
our graduates!*