



ESOL Program Fall 2014 Newsletter

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LEVINE

ESOL PROGRAM COORDINATOR REPORT

It is hard to believe that another semester for the ESOL program has come to an end. Each semester of running the ESOL program always has its challenges but in the end it feels worth it. I was glad to get to know and work with our new interns Tiffany and Ellen. They have been tremendously helpful in supporting the ESOL program through their work. Things can be hectic especially at the beginning of the semester but they learned quickly and stepped in to help out.

Overall though, we had some significant accomplishments during this semester. Among them include our dramatic increase in the number of individuals in the program this semester which went up from 244 in the Spring 2014 term to 399 this semester. We had 315 participants and 84 volunteers join the ESOL Program this semester. Also the social planning committee, under the leadership of Tiffany Pao, planned 3 successful events including a dinner outing at Board and Brews, a Halloween party, and a dinner and game night in the Stamp Student Union. Furthermore, we

had one volunteer training session with 13 people in attendance. In the Chinese-English language exchange, we matched up 148 individuals this semester. Finally, we observed 15 group conversation sessions this semester giving feedback and tips to the volunteers.

For the next semester, I have a number of goals. My biggest hope is that we can increase the number of volunteers in the ESOL Program to 100. Many participants want to have a conversation partner but unfortunately we don't have enough volunteers for all of them to have one. Also, I want to implement a better, less chaotic registration process for participants. This past semester, there were problems with the tutor trac website during registration because of the high volume of participants trying to access it at the same time. I am working on a plan to address this for next semester. Finally, I hope we can expand our social events to at least 4 next semester and work with other student groups in planning them.



SOCIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

The Social Planning Committee under the leadership of Tiffany Pao hosted three events this semester:

Dinner Outing at Board and Brew (October, 9th, 6-8 pm) With 56 people in attendance, we met for dinner and informal conversation and games at the nearby Board and Brew restaurant. Many people played board games or cards that they rented at the restaurant.



Halloween Potluck Social Group Game

Halloween Potluck Social (October 30th, 7-9 pm) With 29 people in attendance for this event, we had an event to celebrate Halloween. During this event, we had a presentation about the history, culture and practices about Halloween as well as related games and activities including apple bobbing, mummy wrapping, and pumpkin decorating.



Bobbing for apples in the Halloween Potluck Social

Dinner and Games Night at the Stamp Student Union (November 21st, 6-8 pm) With 8 people in attendance, we met in the Stamp Student Union for dinner and games. We played a bunch of socializing games including “Who Am I” and “Hippopotamus” that allowed volunteers and participants in the program to get to know each other better.

INTERNS' REFLECTION– TIFFANY PAO

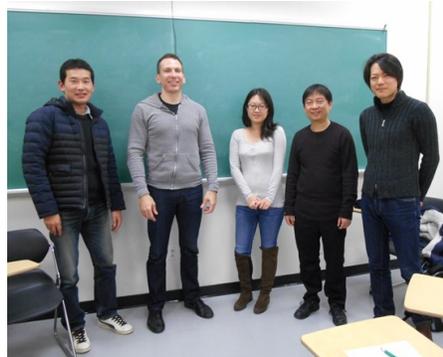
This semester I have the pleasure to assist the ESOL conversation program as an intern with my previous ESOL conversation partner Ellen. As an international student, I have already joined ESOL program as a participant for 1 whole year. I really love this program, as a participant and as an intern. This is the most amazing internship that I have ever had. Partially, it is connected with my major as a TESOL major graduate student. Seeing international students on campus that are actively signing up and participating in the ESOL program is fulfilling.

As an intern of the ESOL program, leading a social planning committee has been my responsibility. Thanks to my awesome social planning committee members, we could hold a lot of social activities for the program. Thank you all of my group for replying my emails or meet up request all the time. Without you guys, there would not be so many fun ideas. Talking about the activities through this semester, we have done dinner and games night, Halloween party, and another dinner night at Stamp. These activities were all fun and great! Meeting new people from this program always made me feel so warm. Another fun thing in ESOL program as an intern was actually visiting most of the regular groups during the middle of this semester. Observing group activities and collecting videos and photos were always intriguing. Most of the time, I also joined the group sessions with everyone to share my viewpoints. You all really did a great job!

I will still stay in ESOL program next semester. Hope we can always bring a lot of fun for everyone. Welcome to ask your friends to join us, too. Let's gather together to practice English again!



DANIEL'S GROUP REFLECTION



In picture (from left to right): Haruyuki Matsuda, Daniel Manco, Shuyue Lai, Hongyi Zhan, Masatoshi Kawakawi.

Haruyuki: ESOL classes gave me precious time when I could gain a lot of cross-cultural knowledge! I feel my English skill is getting improved gradually. Thank you!

Hongyi: In Halloween party, the game of biting apples is very interesting and unforgettable. In the class, I got some very useful information. For example, the information about shopping and driving.

Masatoshi: Memory: My class has some people from different countries. During conversation, I can feel the different culture of each country. In particular, I am interested in the topic of drinking alcohol. Something you learned: Not only conversation skill but also US culture. Grocery topic especially is very useful.

Shuyue: This English learning program is a very helpful and interesting experience for me. I learned about the culture of many different countries since there's a great diversity in our group members. This program also helps a lot with my English, especially the speaking part. Our host is very nice and helpful.

CONVERSATION GROUP REFLECTION- CAMILA, XIANLING, LIHUI

OUR ESOL



Camila Lavadenz, Xianling Lu and Lihui ZHOU, are one of ESOL groups. We three shared three-month good times. Camila gave us some detailed introduction about transportation around Maryland and Washington D.C., restaurants, sports and some famous historic interests. We also discussed some important American holidays including Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Thank you so much for Camila's hard work. We have fun with her in class. We enjoy our ESOL class.



VOLUNTEER REFLECTIONS



Left to right: Liangie, Jingwren, Elvina, Eliana, K'young, Liying, Yi, Lina

Elvina Tryer

My name is Elvina Tryer, and I am a senior undergraduate Civil/Environmental Engineering student at UMD. This semester was my second time volunteering in the ESOL Conversation program. In the beginning when I signed up for the program, I was a bit nervous to take on a group but I wanted to challenge myself and meet many people from around the world. With the help of the resources provided by the ESOL program, I was able to plan my lessons according to what my group members wanted.



"Being an ESOL instructor as a freshman initially seemed intimidating but I quickly realized how enjoyable the experience was going to be after the first session" - Elvina Tryer

In my group, I had participants from Korea, Bolivia, and from the different provinces in China. During our first few weeks, we spent a lot of time getting to know each other. In our conversation sessions, we openly shared our stories, our perspectives, and drew support from each other. As we explored different topics in our discussions, we were often surprised to find similarities and differences within our cultures. I would highly recommend anyone to join this program because it offers an enriching and meaningful experience with so much cultural insight, and friendship with some really amazing people from around the world!

Moriah James

Being an ESOL instructor as a freshman initially seemed intimidating, but I quickly realized how enjoyable the experience was going to be after the first session. Not only did I have the chance to teach my international students about America and help them improve their language skills, but I also got to learn a lot about their countries as well. My major is Cultural Anthropology, so helping others while combining my love for culture turned out to be the perfect mix. You don't need crazy experience to be a successful instructor- just an open personality and willingness to help others. I will definitely be participating in ESOL again soon.



PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS

Jingwen Chen

Hi, I'm Jingwen Chen. It's lucky for me to take part in two groups. One is for 7 group members and other is a small group. My two group leader, Elvina and Don, are both very nice and kindhearted. Every week we all have different topics in our conversation session, like American traditional food, American culture, holidays etc. I've really learnt a lot from each group. This is my first time to participate in ESOL program. I still remembered that when I came to my first conversation session I felt so nervous and too shy to express myself well. Then Elvina encouraged me a lot and her warm smile made me relax.

Additionally, after session when I faced some problem, Elvina always helped me kindly. Two weeks ago she and her friend drove us to the National Aquarium in Baltimore, which was a memorable and wonderful trip not only for our conversation but for our friendship. Meanwhile in my conversation with Don, he told me that communication was for understanding and knowing each other, more than pronunciation which impressed me deeply and helped me to speak English bravely. In Don's group we also discuss lots of topics including my academic research, future career planning especially our life, Don sharing us lots of his experiences which is helpful and interesting. And we are all grateful for our life which is no right and wrong but significant and true to be treasured.

All in all, thank you all, volunteers, Adam and everyone in ESOL program.

Thank you for giving me this chance to meet different people, different culture and helping me to improve my oral English. I appreciate what you're doing for all participants. I hope that I can continue to study English in ESOL program and make new friends!



Rachel Loocke's Conversation group goes out for sushi together



PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS

Zhiying Wang

I'm so happy that I could sign up to the ESOL program with the help of Adam. As a visiting scholar, my speaking English is poor. So I was so worried about it when I came to the UMD. I'm afraid that I could not communicate with foreign friends normally, and even develop my experiment smoothly. On one occasion, I recognized a kind girl who recommended this group to me. I didn't hesitate to send email to Adam. It was excited that he replied me as soon as possible and asked me to make a register at that afternoon. Everything went well. He arranged a class for me. Therefore, I should cherish this chance to practice my English.

Because I started to join the program lately, only two times I had classes. We talk about different topics every class. I like the lesson style. In my first class, Tom asked us to introduce our hometown. As a new student, I didn't make any presentation. But two girls from Shanxi Province in China gave a wonderful introduction, including the original of this province, history events, some famous people and kinds of delicious food. Not only I learned some history stories and knew what places of historic interest I should go to travel to Shanxi, but also the English environment is very important for me. Meanwhile, Tom also introduced his hometown and some history, culture and street layout of Maryland, which promote us to have a basic understanding for the Maryland. Above all, the first class ended up with a pleasant atmosphere.

In the second class, I also prepared some materials to introduce my hometown named Inner Mongolia. It's a good chance for me to improve my English. More importantly, I would like to let more people know my hometown and travel to this place. Meanwhile, we talked about another topic about interview. Although most of us had no experience for finding a job, everyone still express the ideas of ourselves. I think if we insist in practicing the topics that we're interested in, I'm confident with my English. If some foreign friends could also join this program in the next term, I think it will be better.

That's all I would like to share with everybody. Hope you have a good day!



Jinyi Kuang

My name is Jinyi Kuang and I am a new transfer student from China. I joined the ESOL language partner program at the beginning of this semester. It is a group meeting and our volunteer Rex is a gentleman. He always gets great preparation every time we meet. We have interesting and profound topics and during our meet up, I really learnt a lot from his lifelong experienced advice. Thanks so much for all the ESOL volunteers and staffs. Thanks for your hardwork and warm help!!!

Xin Liu

At Thanksgiving Day, my English partner invited me and Xia Zhang to go to his family dinner. Most of his families came back from other states, including his children, grand-children, and great grand children. And all his families are very friendly. My English partner is already 88 years old, but very healthy and kindly. This term he not only help me in English speaking, but also in other things. Very thankful to him and ESOL program.

Ram Sarkar

Hello everybody I'm Ram from India. I'm doing my post-doctoral research in the Computer Science Department, at the University of Maryland. I learned about the ESOL Program in the International Student Orientation Program. On that very day, I was resolute that I wanted to join this program because I came to the USA, expecting there should be some program like this. So, when I heard about this, I was pleased. Before I share my experience, I must thank Adam Lax, the Coordinator of the ESOL Program, a very generous person, for allowing me to join the program, even though it had already started.

To me, this ESOL Program serves many purposes. First, it helps to polish English skills. It promotes confidence while speaking, eliminates shyness, and improves fluency. Second, it serves as a great opportunity to make new friends outside classrooms or labs, which is very important. Students generally like to discuss theirs syllabi, assignments and so on with classmates; however, the ESOL Program allows them to focus on the other aspects of their lives. Hence, everyone should have beyond-classroom friends to make them multi-dimensional. Third, this program allows participants to meet other international people, which is quite an uncommon scenario in day-to-day life. In this program, there are discussions about different cultures, customs, and traditions followed by other people. These ultimately help to shape the world in a friendlier manner, which is a pressing need of human society as our society is becoming more violent with each passing day. Now, I have friends from Korea, China, Japan, and Spain. To make this happen, all the credit goes to the ESOL Program. (continued on page 11)

MEGAN'S GROUP REFLECTION



Left to right: Peter (Yichao) Xu, Michael (Sizhong) Sun, Yafang Song, Megan Tran, Siyi Gu, Sang Gyu Lee

Megan: I like to do a lot of conversation sessions where everyone could feel free to ask whatever question they wanted and talk about what interested them. The atmosphere was friendly and everyone liked speaking up—we learned a lot about each other! It makes me so happy that everyone became friends. I had a lot of fun, the conversations were very fun, and I'm glad everyone had a chance to speak their minds while enjoying learning English.

Peter: Here I learned a lot of things, especially in speaking English. Every time I went there, we have much topics to talk about. I really enjoy this program and I will take it again!

Michael: Learn a lot of new words, and know some US culture. Made some new friends. In the class we talk about different kind of things, the teacher is very good, she gives me a lot of help. The class improved my ability for listening and speaking (English).

Yafang: I'm really appreciated the help of our tutor - Megan Tran. She is very kind and helpful. It's really good for us to take part in the ESOL conversation group. We can learn more things about American culture, holidays, and so on. We play games together, we ask questions one by one, all of these give me more impression (of English and American culture). Through ESOL, we not only improved our English level, but also we can make friends and communicate with each other, so I really want to say: thanks Megan!

Siyi: I learned things about US culture. We had a good time playing games about Halloween just before the Festival. I learned many new vocabularies about Halloween and what people do to celebrate it. Also, we talked about Thanksgiving and other festivals. In our group, we talked a lot and I knew every group member. We are friends now!

Sang Gyu: I learned abbreviations people use in daily lives and Halloween cultures. It was very fun to talk with people about different cultures, and I could ask many questions. The most important thing is that I had chances to try to express my opinions and explain things in English. The conversation group was helpful and constructive.

SUSAN AND ZILIN'S REFLECTIONS



Zilin and Susan attended a Seventeen Promotional event held on Hornbake Plaza.

Zilin Zhou

As a graduate student, I appreciate that ESOL has given me a great opportunity to practice my English with a partner. During our sessions, I not only practice my English with my partner Susan, but I also had a chance to walk around the campus and attend some events with her. I am very grateful that I have such a wonderful partner. She is so nice and great! Since our first meeting, she has been helping me explore the campus, find some interesting clubs I can join, and we even did a simulated interview together. I enjoy talking with her and doing things together. It's so sad that this semester is about to end. Thanks a lot, Susan!

Susan Ojo

Being a part of ESOL is a priceless experience. Zilin (a.k.a. Sookie) and I have learned so much from each other this semester. We have visited different parts of the campus such as the Art museum in Stamp and the career center. She was the one who told me that Hilary Clinton would be visiting the campus, so because of her, I was able to see one of my heroes. I enjoy talking to Sookie about her coursework and the engaging things that she has been participating in on campus, such as the Alternative breaks. She has taught me so much about Chinese culture and I really enjoy her positive attitude and willingness to try new things. Being a conversation partner to Sookie this semester has been very rewarding and I will miss her so much when the semester ends.

PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS

Paul: You Are a Real Professor!

by Bo Wu

Mr. Paul Thompson is our English conversation leader. When I saw Paul in person was at the third week's class. Because he traveled to Europe to see his son. A tall thin gentleman wearing in a suit smiled into the classroom, murmured "I am just try to look like other Professor." That was the first image and it gave me a deep impress.

There are eight students in our group. We are all new comers. At first class Paul made name cards for everyone, and surely didn't forget leave one for himself. So our class is formal one, at least in formal. At first class every student made a brief self-introduction to others, at the end Paul made a full introduction to us. And after that, whenever when a new person came in Paul will make an introduction again. In my memory, he at least has repeated four times, but every time there are something new leaked, so I can say I know Paul quite well.

Every class Paul has made a careful preparation. We are all for the first time to come here. Since the start of class, we experienced several traditional American holidays. Halloween Day, Veteran Day, Thanksgiving Day and the coming Christmas Day. When the holiday is approaching, Paul will talk with us about its history, cultural characters and interesting things. For example, about Thanksgiving Day, we learned a lot of American foods and drinks beside Turkey. It is not just only a name, but also its taste and how to make and eat it.

Besides that, we have several interesting main topics: Gun control, Vote and American politic systems, law system and shopping. One day Paul came into the class with a little book, he told us "This is the constitution of the United States of America". He gave us some printed papers,---"Bill of rights", then we talked about First 10 Amendments to the Constitution.

One day Paul decided to make up our missed classes. You know that's a difficulty job. There are so many people, hard to choice a common time and hard to look for an empty classroom. Anyhow, he made it. Just before Halloween Day, we transferred from Marie Mount Hall to Jiménez Hall to have additional class. That day Paul dressed in a big black hat, was there something symbolized? I don't know and did ask for neither. He gave us handouts about Edgar Allan Poe and the famous poem Raven. The conversation session was so interesting that the time passed quickly, the other students gathered outside the classroom, they will have class there. Their teacher pushed into the door, told Paul loudly "I have class now." But Paul insisted on reciting emotionally the poem to the end in lower charming mixed a little bit blue sound. You know after class, I went to the library listened via internet to the recording many times, and made a plan to Baltimore someday to looking for the Poe's cemetery to giving my respect to him.

That is our leader! I will say sincerely in my heart "Paul, You are a real Professor!"

A Wonderful Trip to the National Aquarium

by Yi Guo

We had a really great experience here with our group volunteer Elvina. Every week, we discussed topics from poetry and articles to interesting pictures. Within these past few weeks, we have learned a lot from each other and gained new friends from America, Korea, Bolivia, and different provinces in China.

On November 14th, a Friday, Elvina organized a wonderful field trip to the National Aquarium in Baltimore. We appreciate Elvina and her friend for giving us a ride. Although it was very cold outside, we felt quite warm in our hearts as we visited the fascinating exhibits in the aquarium together. During the trip, we took many pictures of the cute sea animals, and also group pictures of all of us. You can see how happily we smile; we feel like we are a family.

We also got to bring some of our family members and friends to share this experience. Jenny and her roommate watched a 4D theater show in the aquarium, and they thought it was amazing. Lina's son bought a lovely penguin toy with big shining eyes, and I enjoyed looking at the beautiful pictures on the wall.

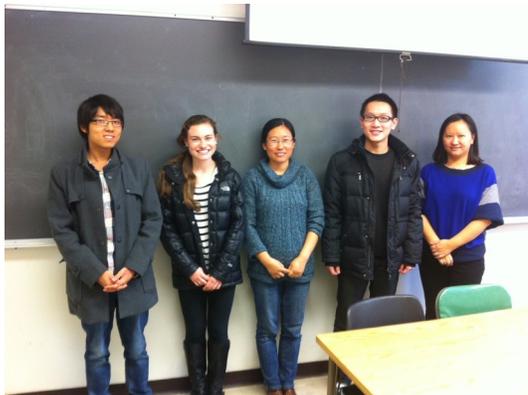
What is most important is not where we go, but what we feel and learn in the process. We are all from different countries, we speak different languages, and we have diverse cultural backgrounds, yet we can get together, share our perspectives, have enjoyable conversations, and take nice trips. We will cherish this experience and the opportunity to meet each other. We hope to continue to keep our friendship no matter where we will be, and what we will be doing in the future.



"The conversation session was so interesting that the time passed quickly." - Bo Wu



NICOLE MALAMENT REPORTS ON HER PARTICIPANTS'



The ESOL program at the University of Maryland has created a realm of possibilities for our group. It has allowed a group of strangers originating from four countries to come together and gain an appreciation for each other's cultures and customs while learning in a supportive environment.

ESOL participant Olivia Ji likes the program because it allows her to learn about other cultures.

"This program is a good way to learn about the American culture and improve communication," Ji said. "Talking about it can help us to know more about a different culture."

In addition to learning about American customs, participants can learn about other Asian customs.

"I expected the group to only be Chinese students," Ziwei Huang said. "But we also have students from Japan and South Korea. I did not expect it to be so diverse, and it was interesting to get a lot of opinions."

The program was helpful to student, Yuzhi Fan, who feels that the program allows participants to learn the unspoken rules of American society that are not common knowledge for students studying abroad. "I had the opportunity to ask questions that I did not know who else to ask," Fan said. "I asked about how much to tip for pizza delivery, how to speak to salesmen in stores, and local holidays like Halloween."

Overall, participants said that they would recommend the program to other students.

"With the cultural difference, there can be difficulties to communicate effectively, but I've learned that we have many things in common," Yao Fu said. "It was really surprising. Americans and Asians have similar opinions on attitude towards families, celebration, and a lot of other things we talk about."

All of the participants agree that this has been a positive experience and that they enjoyed their time learn-

JANAE'S GROUP REFLECTION



Left to right: Sylvia Wu, Janae Nelson, Francis Di Liang, Naoto Hori.

Janae: One interesting thing I learned in the conversation group was the "dating parties" that occur in Japan. It's a mix between a blind date and a group date. It would be interesting to see similar parties happen in the US.

Naoto: By attending the conversation group, of course. I think my English is improving. Also I really enjoy hearing about culture of other countries. I work as a research scholar, so usually I do not have much time to talk about general things such as food, travel, music, etc. Conversation group is a good time to do so and very much fun.

Francis: The ESOL Program is really interesting and helpful. We share different cultures and experiences. I learned a lot about American students' hobbies and I will remember this group forever. For most international students, it is really efficient and thorough to get used to American life. Don't be shy. Start to realize your American Dream from here. Have fun!

Sylvia: In our ESOL conversation group, we discuss a topic every week. Our group leader Janae prepares questions on the topics and the questions trigger heated discussions. My most memorable topic is on education. From our discussion, I discovered that though education systems in different countries seem to vary, our experiences in education are very similar. We share the same concerns about life, the future, and higher education. Dating, relationships, and marriage form another topic that stimulated heated discussion. There was a debate over values and our understanding of a relationship. The ESOL Program is not only about conversation and language, it is also about learning from other cultures.



"I had the opportunity to ask questions that I did not know who else to ask."

—Yuzhi Fan



VOLUNTEER REFLECTION– JADE JOHNSON

ESOL is one of the best clubs that I have been a part of on campus as I have gained lots of experience, made new friends and learned about different cultures. I've volunteered with both conversation groups and partners, meeting many from China. This semester I had an advanced conversation partner from China and now I can call her a good friend. We've bonded through our time spent together whether it was discussing different topics, helping her with her professional skills or doing activities together. We feel comfortable enough to share whatever we have on our minds from dating to roommate issues to embarrassing stories and she isn't afraid to ask me for advice. There has never been a session where we haven't laughed. Some days we'll follow the conversation guidelines other times the conversation comes naturally. We always begin our conversation sessions by sharing what we did over the weekend, how our weeks went and whether we have any questions or concerns or a funny story to share with each other. Some topics we've discussed include sports, entertainment such as favorite TV shows, music and books, employment, culture shock, current events, travel and dating/relationships.

I have benefitted from these sessions because I have gained a new friend, gained experience to help me in my future career as I want to teach English abroad and work in the international development sector, and learned new things. For example, since she works and I am applying to jobs, she has given me networking advice and in exchange, I have helped her improve her formal English language skills such as how to write a polite email to her boss or formatting her cover letter. I also learned that past tense doesn't exist in the Chinese language, more about her job/major which is finance and lots of what she enjoys of which we have a lot in common. We've exchanged T.V. shows to watch, music to listen to, movies, drinks or food, restaurants to try, countries we want to travel to and more. Some outings we've shared include coffee or ice cream dates or dinner. The only challenges I've faced include trying to find synonyms for other words and explaining why some words are used the way they are or what their meanings are. For example, it was difficult explaining the difference between 'wait' and 'await.'

However, I hope I have helped her grow as a person and improve her English and am hopeful that she will either find a better job or gain visa spon-

sorship from where she works now. I also hope that our friendship will continue and we will engage in more fun activities together over break or in the future. I would encourage anyone to become a volunteer tutor for the ESOL Conversation Program since you make a new friend, it doesn't require any teaching experience but provides you with some, it is rewarding in that you gain and learn a lot along with your partner or group and most importantly, it's fun!



"ESOL is one of the best clubs that I have been a part of on campus" - Jade Johnson



Natalie and Haiqing



ESOL COORDINATOR RESPONSE TO PARTICIPANT MID-SEMESTER EVALUATION COMMENTS

“The way to apply should be changed. People has to wait in front of the PC for a couple of hours and I waste the time only to apply. Drawing or any other method will be nicer.”

I understand that online registration at the beginning of the semester had significant problems. As a result I am work-

ing to develop a better system for online registration for the Spring 2015 semester. We may be doing registration for different groups of participants for different days of the week. Making a better online registration process is a major priority for me next semester.

“It is quite useful for those non-native English speakers to improve their English, hopefully, more and more volunteers can join the programs to make our classes smaller”

Increasing the number of volunteers in our program is another major priority for me next semester. I will work on strategies for improving our volunteer recruitment so that we can get more volunteers for the program. Unfortunately, we will most likely still not have enough for all participants next semester to have a partner.

ESOL COORDINATOR RESPONSE TO VOLUNTEER MID SEMESTER EVALUATION

“Provide volunteers with information about official English classes for adults who speak other languages in the College Park area, for ESOL students who would also like to attend formal classes.”

This is a great idea. I will be sure to include this in the future conversation session guidelines provided to volunteers for next semester.

“The more ideas on the guide-

line the better and those topics should be practical because some topics are not very good to talk about and will not generate much discussion. Also some topics creates many awkward silences because the participants don't want to talk about it or don't know much about it to talk about it.”

I will work to revise the conversation guidelines provided to the volunteers to include more interesting topics. Suggestions from volunteers for topics that have in-

terested students in your conversation sessions would help as well. I would also suggest finding out topics that participants want to talk about and tailor conversation sessions around them.

“Maybe a little more direction as to what to do during sessions. While I enjoy talking with my conversation partner, sometimes I feel like I don't know what to talk about.”

I would suggest reviewing the topics in the conversation guideline and have your partner look at it as well. From this the volunteer and partner can figure out what they want to talk about. Also, you can have your partner prepare some kind of topic that interests them before each session.

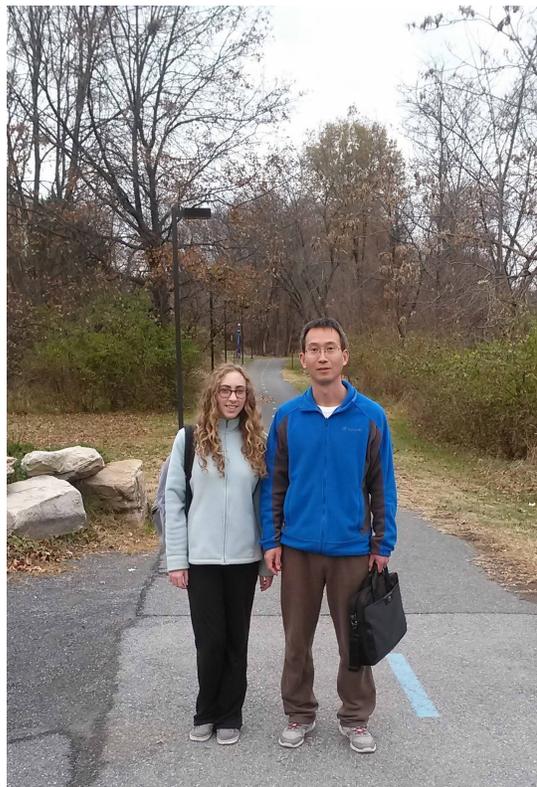
Ram Sarkur Participant Reflection (continued from page 6) I joined two conversation groups; one was led by Rex (a 61 year old *young* man) from the USA, and another one was guided by Sangyoon (an undergraduate student) from Korea. Though the ways of conducting the conversation of these two group-leaders were totally different, I appreciate that they were unique in their own ways. Rex has experienced so many things in life, and he always loved to share his experiences with us. Since he is an American, we always asked him to tell us more about American cultures, foods, festivals, and so on. Moreover, each day he came up with some interesting topics to discuss with us. On the other hand, Sangyoon, a young man, loved to make the conversation more exciting with his innovative ideas. He involved us in different games, which made the discussion more desirable, and we got to know each other in better ways. One day, he told us to prepare a presentation about any issue, which is close to our hearts and which we would love to share with others, such as our family/country/culture/university/city etc. With this presentation, we came to know more about each other. For these reasons, we used to be eager to join the next conversation session. On one occasion, Rex offered us a tea-party, and we all had a rare experience to taste teas imported from different countries like India, China, Japan, and some European countries. Rex arranged everything on his own and made the day so memorable. On another day, Rex drove us to Silver Spring to have lunch, but he specifically mentioned to us that on that day we were going to taste some other cuisines which we never tasted before. It was so exciting for me because on that day, I had the chance to taste Thai food, and it was really delicious. Besides, the day was cold but sunny with a clear blue sky, so we enjoyed the ride very much, and serene landscape of the countryside was truly refreshing.

Apart from the conversation groups, the ESOL Program always included some social events. Through these events, we got to know more about the American people, society, festivals and different life styles, which are equally important when visiting a new country to study, to research or have a job. In a nutshell, the ESOL Program rocks!



ESOL SUPER PHOTO SPECIAL! ☆

Below: Participants make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for the first time.



Below: Participants visit the Washington Monument.



Right: Guan Wei and his group on a hiking trip

Guan Wei writes: Joining the ESOL program is one of my best decision this term. Danielle, the leader of our group, is a lovely enthusiastic girl and she has made a lot of efforts to help group members to better understand the culture here. Besides the regular meeting each week, we also hangout with each other. For example, we celebrate the Thanksgiving Festival together and go hiking on a sunny day.





We will be starting up again in the Spring 2015 Semester

If you want to be a volunteer or a participant in ESOL Program again, please e-mail the coordinator (umdesol@gmail.com) in late January.

<http://counseling.umd.edu/LAS/ESOL/>

Also for up to date information and news about our program for the Spring 2015 Term please check our blog



End of Semester Social- Spring 2014

