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Maximizing the impact of the in-person one-shot in community colleges

Selecting courses to target for library instruction through curriculum analysis

At many colleges, library instruction is not a curricular requirement. The predominant approach to library instruction in community colleges continues to be the provision of face-to-face, course-integrated sessions taught by librarians at the request of teaching faculty. Participating teaching faculty usually schedule a single library instruction session for their classes—the “one-shot”—which may constitute a student’s *only* library instruction session during their undergraduate experience.

Because participation in the library instruction program is at the discretion of each instructor, many students complete their degree or certificate *without* experiencing a library instruction session. In an attempt to remedy this problem, community college libraries often set library instruction growth targets that emphasize the total number of sessions taught. To achieve this operational objective, an unfocused outreach approach may be pursued, inviting all teaching faculty to participate in the library instruction program.

The rationale behind blanket outreach is that we want to reach as many students as possible. However, if community college libraries are not expanding library instruction programs in a way that is strategic and sustainable, then they may not be reaching the students who need them the most. With this in mind, at the outset of the 2014–15 academic year, the Germanna Community

College (GCC) Libraries initiated a targeted approach to library instruction outreach with the goal of maximizing the face-to-face, course-integrated library instruction program’s impact on student learning, achievement, and persistence. GCC’s strategic approach to shaping the library instruction program entailed analyzing the curriculum to identify the courses in which students are likely to derive the maximum benefit from library instruction, and focusing library instruction outreach efforts on instructors teaching targeted courses, and their managers.

Background

GCC is a comprehensive, regionally accredited community college with an FTE of 4,300 and a service region encompassing both suburban and rural areas.

GCC offers nine transfer degrees and ten technical/occupational degrees. All transfer degrees require the completion of two freshman composition courses, College Composition I (ENG 111) and College Composition II (ENG 112). In addition, six of the ten technical/occupational degrees require the completion of both freshman

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composition courses, with the remainder requiring completion of the first composition course in the sequence. All one-year technical certificates require completion of ENG 111.

Program advising sheets highlight the importance of the freshman composition courses. Students in the vast majority of the GCC's degree programs are advised to take ENG 111 in their first semester and ENG 112 in their second semester. Certificate programs advise students to take ENG 111 in their first semester. The centrality of college composition courses to the curriculum ensures that both courses in the freshman composition sequence are consistently among GCC's top three "high enrollment" courses.

Selecting the general education courses for targeted library instruction outreach

Selecting the general education courses to target for library instruction outreach is among the most important decisions a community college library instruction program will make. At GCC, both courses in the freshman composition sequence support the acquisition and demonstration of information literacy skills and are targeted for one-shot library instruction.

In addition to considering the role of the freshman composition sequence in the context of the curriculum, a number of college documents were reviewed for evidence that these courses were the best match for building students' information literacy skills. The most relevant documents were the official course descriptions, GCC's standard course outlines, and GCC's general education curriculum map. Both course descriptions indicate that students will have assignments requiring them to demonstrate information literacy skills.

Moreover, an examination of GCC's standard course outlines for ENG 111 and ENG 112 reveals that both courses include information literacy learning outcomes among the course learning outcomes that

students are expected to achieve. Also, because much of the research conducted in freshman composition courses is interdisciplinary in nature, these courses are a particularly good match for foundational information literacy instruction.

Finally, both courses in the freshman composition sequence have been designated as supporting GCC's information literacy general education competency, which is reflected in the college's general education curriculum map, as well as the standard course outlines. Both courses are, therefore, assessed for information literacy learning per GCC's course-embedded General Education Assessment Plan.

Why target the freshman composition sequence for library instruction, rather than other general education courses? The freshman composition sequence plays an outsized role in the curriculum at GCC, and it is an excellent vehicle for cultivating information literacy skills. By targeting the freshman composition sequence, community college libraries are creating an impactful, de facto "first year" library instruction experience. Such an experience ensures that students receive information literacy instruction with the potential to influence course grades in their first and second semesters—and beyond. A study by Jason M. Vance, Rachel Kirk, and Justin G. Gardner found a small correlation between library instruction and undergraduate GPA in the first year.¹

Selecting the program courses for targeted library instruction outreach

An examination of the program outcomes associated with each degree program may reveal a program with courses that are suitable candidates for library instruction. For example, GCC offers an associate's degree in Applied Science in Nursing, containing a program outcome that is unequivocally aligned with information literacy. The outcome stipulates that students will be able to "demonstrate nursing judgement through

the use of clinical reasoning, the nursing process, and evidence-based practice in the provision of safe, quality care.”²

In addition to considering program outcomes, choosing program courses to target for library instruction entails considering program accreditation standards, program sequence, course learning outcomes in specific program courses, and the nature of course research assignments. For the majority of community colleges, the program courses selected for inclusion in the library instruction outreach plan should consist of core courses in designated health sciences programs, such as nursing and dentistry.

At GCC, two foundational nursing courses, Nursing I (NUR 111) and Nursing II (NUR 112), were included in the library instruction outreach plan.

Pursuing targeted library instruction outreach

At GCC, a targeted library instruction outreach strategy was implemented beginning with of the 2014–15 academic year. At the start of each fall and spring semester, the schedule of classes was reviewed, and an informational email addressing library instruction was sent to every faculty member scheduled to teach ENG 111 and ENG 112. The English Department Chair was also included in the list of email recipients.

In some cases, faculty members responded directly to the informational email and requested to schedule library instruction. In other cases, faculty members clicked on the scheduling link within the informational email and filled out a library instruction request form. In both the 2015–16 and 2016–17 academic years, a follow-up email was sent directly to individual English faculty members whose classes were not on the library instruction calendar by the middle of the regular (16 week) semester. Communication and collaboration with the chair of the English Department was an essential component

of GCC’s targeted library instruction outreach strategy.

Communication and collaboration with the faculty teaching Nursing I and Nursing II, as well as the dean of Nursing and Health Technologies, was the other key element in GCC’s targeted library instruction outreach strategy.

The results of targeted library instruction outreach

Over the course of three academic years, pursuing a targeted library instruction outreach plan successfully expanded the reach of the library instruction program for the targeted English courses. The percentage of ENG 111 sections participating in a one-shot library instruction session increased by 14% from 2014–15 to 2016–17, climbing from 32% to 46%. The percentage of ENG 112 sections participating in a one-shot library instruction session increased by 5%, rising from 21% to 26%. The library also maintained its 100% library instruction participation rate with the two targeted program courses, NUR 111 and NUR 112.

In addition, across all courses, the total number of one-shot sessions taught by the library instruction program increased in a sustainable manner. When comparing the first and third years in which the targeted approach was implemented, the library instruction program maintained an 8% increase in the total number of sessions taught. Two important unit resources that are impacted by an increase in library instruction—staffing levels and computer classroom availability—were sufficient to accommodate the change.

Opportunities for improving teaching and learning

Finally, the library’s extensive communication and collaboration with the English Department resulted in two significant opportunities for improving teaching and learning relative to the

library instruction program. First, by targeting a sequence of courses taught by the same department—and many of the same instructors—the library was well positioned to make the case for sequencing library instruction learning outcomes across both courses in the sequence. During the 2015–16 academic year, when the library began sequencing session-level learning outcomes across ENG 111 and ENG 112, feedback from teaching faculty was overwhelmingly positive. When library instruction learning outcomes are sequenced across two courses, librarians can design and facilitate instructional experiences that reinforce and expand upon information literacy learning.

The second major opportunity for improving teaching and learning was an authentic assessment project, which doubled as a correlational research project. In 2016–17, student work products were gathered from a random sample of ENG 111 courses that received library instruction, as well as a random sample of ENG 111 courses that did not. The English Department Chair obtained and provided access to student work products from the designated sections.

The work products consisted of research logs and annotated bibliographies, which had been incorporated into all sections of ENG 111 as common, course-embedded general education assessments with standard assignment prompts. The very *existence* of these assessments aligned with library instruction learning outcomes is another example of collaboration between librarians and the English Department.

Librarians scored the student work products using locally created rubrics aligned with the library instruction learning outcomes in the standard ENG 111 one-shot session. Analysis of the assessment results indicated that students in the “treatment” group performed significantly better than students in the “control”

group on most of the rubric dimensions. Prior to the authentic assessment project, the library relied on brief pre- and post-tests administered at the beginning and ending of each library instruction session. The authentic assessments provided far more insight into students’ performance of information literacy skills than the pre- and post-tests, which offered only snapshots of student learning at the lower levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy.

Conclusion

Targeted library instruction outreach at GCC has yielded impactful and sustainable library instruction growth that builds students’ information literacy skill set and is likely to improve student success. First, the GCC curriculum was analyzed to select the general education and program courses targeted for library instruction outreach. Then, a highly focused approach to library instruction outreach was pursued.

Targeted library instruction outreach promoted extensive communication and collaboration between the library and specific academic departments. In addition to shaping an impactful and sustainable library instruction program, targeted library instruction outreach facilitated the sequencing of library instruction learning outcomes across freshman composition courses, library involvement in the redesign of course-embedded general education assessment instruments, and library participation in an authentic assessment project.

Notes

1. Jason M. Vance, Rachel Kirk, and Justin G. Gardner, “Measuring the Impact of Library Instruction on Freshman Success and Persistence,” *Communications in Information Literacy* 6, no. 1 (March 2012): 49–58.

2. Germanna Community College, “Nursing, Programs of Study,” Germanna Community College, accessed July 13, 2017, www.germannacollege.edu/programs/nursing/. 