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Develop subject-specific library orientations

Goal Name: Develop Subject-specific Library Orientations across disciplines

Goal (state goal): The goal is to consolidate students' knowledge in subject areas across disciplines by providing subject-specific orientations that are customized to meet their information needs. The three-tier survey and assessment tools and processes, that are part and parcel of every orientation offered to students, are designed to achieve the twin purpose of empowering students to broaden their knowledge base by making them realize the gaps in their information sources and to understand the appropriate steps to be taken to remedy these informational gaps; second, through the deployment of systematic rubrics, assess students' skills in using the Library's resources effectively, which is ultimately determined by how well they incorporate and synthesize the information into the research assignment.

Rationale: Orientations until now have been done on an *ad hoc* basis. Over the years, the sheer volume of general and subject-specific library orientations, from two-year colleges to institutions of higher learning, has resulted in one-shot fifty-minute library orientations with predictable results. Each librarian, in consultation with the instructor, decides what to do for each individual class, and rarely, if ever, shares this information with any of his/her colleagues. The chance encounter with the teaching faculty days after the orientation evokes such anecdotal remarks as the "library orientation was very helpful to students to find appropriate resources, and I would definitely request another library orientation next semester." While such words of encouragement vindicate the role of the librarian in academic success of students, it is merely anecdotal and does not provide a *clear picture of how student-centered learning* is actually *taking place* and what *verifiable data* is available to *validate* and *authenticate* such claims, true as they may be.

Instead of teaching faculty and librarians operating in separate and disconnected spheres, the rationale for a more integrated and collaborative approach between teaching faculty and librarians in order to facilitate students' learning is never more compelling and urgent than now. As Thomas H. Benton points out, "Professors and librarians are socialized into different professions with different values that can make us mutually incomprehensible: One emphasizes individual scholarly productivity; the other looks to provide the context in which that work can take place...We can design assignments in consultation with librarians so it becomes impossible for students to pass through college without learning how to write a research paper, produce an educational video podcast, or accomplish any other goal that requires the critical evaluation of sources. If we can re-conceptualize our teaching as collaborative research with students and librarians, then the library could become analogous to the laboratory in the sciences, and it would become impossible to imagine the future of any college without it." (Benton, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 7, 2009).

Subject-specific library orientations that clearly incorporate the goals of specific coursework offer students the highest level of relevancy and applicability in the attainment of library skills and sharpen their incentive to learning.

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Strategies: Orientations will be targeted directly towards a particular subject area, with direct collaboration between librarians and instructional faculty. Specific assignments can be addressed during these orientations, making them more relevant and useful to the students. Our teaching strategy is to replace the age-old dichotomy between learning and teaching that anoints the professor as "gatekeeper" of knowledge doling out pearls of wisdom in small doses with a collaborative learning space where faculty and students embark on a collaborative exploration of knowledge, sharing in the joy of discovery and the satisfaction of using new skills and ideas. This new paradigm will open up limitless possibilities for lifelong learning and experimentation. Our objective is to facilitate student learning, not mechanically cover a certain block of material. McKeachie describes succinctly this process and how we need to reconfigure what we do in the classroom: "In most courses, we are concerned about helping our students in a lifelong learning process; that is, we want to develop interest in further learning and provide a base of concepts and skills that will facilitate further learning and thinking" (McKeachie, W. J. (1986). *Teaching Tips*, p. 10).

The clarion call of McKeachie and Benton should frame our strategies for teaching library orientations. The subject-specific orientations that librarians and teaching faculty will collaboratively design have three integrated and sequential phases. In **Phase I** the students will answer, prior to their visit to the library for an orientation, a set of questions designed to test their familiarity with library resources and when and how to seek information to expand their knowledge base. A close examination of students' responses will give the teaching faculty and librarian a better understanding of the level of knowledge and information-seeking skills the students possess. This information can then be used to tailor the subject-specific orientations, in the second phase, to especially address the areas of concern where students encounter the greatest conceptual difficulties and hurdles. (See assignment for **Phase I**—attached)

Pre Library Orientation Information Competency Assessment http://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?hl=en&formkey=dFdSSEU0N0pLYnE4T3dTd1hKcE5ud3c6MA.

The subject-specific orientation is followed by a set of self-assessment questions (**Phase II**) that students must respond to in order to gauge if they have learned new skills and expanded their knowledge base. The students will also provide a research log that monitors their own progress in gathering, critically examining and integrating information from various formats and sources into their research assignment. The research log should include the joys and frustrations of finding information. The areas of frustration can provide a golden opportunity for students and librarians to conduct face-to-face workshops that specifically target these problem areas. These workshops will close the gaps in their knowledge base and make the knowledge-seeking endeavor ultimately more holistic and complete. (See **Phase II** assignment attached)

Assessing Library Orientations for Students' Success http://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?hl=en&formkey=dDNZMjhuUldZMUxPNGF0LU9Zemd2bHc6 MA.

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In the third phase the teaching faculty is asked to respond to specific questions that assesses student learning outcomes. Using constructed rubrics to assess student learning outcomes (**Phase III**) as evidenced in the research assignment and research logs submitted by students, the comparison can then be made between students' response in the second phase and the actuality of their learning process as reflected in term papers. This will provide the best litmus test to measure student learning outcomes. (See **Phase III** assignment attached)

Rubric for evaluating students' information competency and learning outcomes http://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?hl=en&formkey=dHo1UklzcGJqNXdHY3ZRY3B4TUw1Y2c6MA

An overall systematic assessment of this three-phased program involving teaching faculty and librarians will provide the necessary data to redesign the program, if necessary. This continual improvement through assessment of our orientation program will make the programmatic sequence of library orientations more meaningful and pertinent to students' learning outcomes and lifelong learning.

Responsible Parties: Librarians and instructional faculty

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