Impact of Information Literacy Instruction on Student Success
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Abstract
Libraries have historically struggled to demonstrate their impact on student success and academic achievement. Most academic libraries have relied upon user satisfaction surveys, but student analytics provide a more robust gauge of the library's influence on student performance. The USF Tampa Library engaged in a multimodal assessment strategy using student self-reported data combined with performance analytics to establish a link between the library's information literacy instruction program and student success.

Process & Methodology

Project Conception: Needs-Gap Analysis
Institutional mandate for library to demonstrate impact on student success vs. lack of ready access to student data

Development Plan:
1. Identify potential academic partners (FYIs)
2. Establish contacts
3. Formulate strategy
4. Develop project timeline, deadlines and deliverables

Design Data Gathering Methodologies:
1. Obtain IRB approval
2. Design quantitative procedures
3. Design qualitative survey
4. Obtain student email contacts

Gather Quantitative & Qualitative Data:
- Obtain and reconcile 2012 attendance grade data for First Year Comp classes
- Reconcile/merge with in-house data
- Deploy qualitative survey

Analysis:
1. Perform means comparison on student grade data (Attendees vs. non-attendees)
2. Compile and analyze qualitative survey data
3. Share outcomes

Research Questions
- Do First Year Composition students who attend an information literacy instruction event perform better in their course [academically] than students who do not?
- Do First Year Composition students who attend an information literacy instruction event perceive that they have acquired research and source evaluation skills that will result in an improved grade in the course?
- Do First Year Composition students who attend an information literacy instruction event perceive that they have acquired research and source evaluation skills that will positively impact their future academic performance?

Literature Review
As noted in the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) report on the Value of Academic Libraries, “Librarians are increasingly called upon to document and articulate the value of academic and research libraries and their contribution to institutional mission and goals.” (ACRL, 2010) While librarians have been concerned with outcomes assessment for decades (Carter, 2002; Daugherty & Carter, 1997; Grear, Weston, & Alm, 1991; Kunkel, Weaver, & Cook, 1996; Riddle & Hartman, 2000) the emphasis on student success is a much more recent development. This philosophy has progressed somewhat over the last several years from emphasizing outcomes-based assessment techniques within the confined space of library instruction to a more extensive advocacy of integrated information literacy outcomes into the general curriculum. Many studies have focused specifically on information literacy-related learning outcomes that may be present (although not articulated) in courses within a specified field of study and the degree to which students acquire and retain those information literacy skills after receiving instruction (Samson, 2010) (Natalie & Crowe, 2013; Seiber, 2013). Assessment pioneers such as Megan Oakleaf have written extensively on the need for academic libraries to seek out campus partnerships and constantly advocate for the integration of information literacy learning outcomes into the general education curriculum (Oakleaf, 2011; Oakleaf, 2011; Oakleaf, 2011; Oakleaf, Millot, & Kraus, 2011). The work of such scholars has set the stage for the next task: correlating information literacy instruction and skills acquisition with higher levels of general academic achievement.

Leaders in academic libraries have recommended for several years now that the profession demonstrate not only that libraries can positively affect students in terms of information literacy skills, but that those skills contribute to academic success and institutional goals in more tangible ways, such as course grades and even perhaps in student retention. An early visionary for adopting such a strategy, O’Harlan in 2007 outlines the role of the academic library as a key player in the university’s outcomes assessment efforts and reports on a study that gauged the impact of information literacy instruction on several general education courses (O’Harlan, 2007). Moreover, Vance et al. study in 2012 explores the relationship that formal information literacy instruction sessions have on undergraduate student performance in higher education (Vance, Kirk, & Gardner, 2012). This study successfully showed that library instruction has a positive, albeit small, correlation with student performance in the class.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Conclusion: Student analytics represent an excellent means for demonstrating the level of impact that library instructional activities have on student success at the course level. Based upon the findings in this study, a positive correlation between student experience with information literacy instruction and improved grades appears to exist. Even though libraries typically do not generate student data in the same way that credit-granting colleges do, academic partnerships between the libraries and colleges can provide a wealth of student analytic data. However, differences in data gathering and labeling techniques can complicate data analysis efforts. Clear communication and an emphasis on mutual benefit for stakeholders is essential in the success of such a project. Adding a qualitative component provides an additional perspective. Students who experience course-integrated library instruction report that these experiences contribute to their academic success on the course level and in future endeavors.

Recommendations: While the findings of this study indicate a positive correlation between information literacy instruction and higher academic achievement, further investigation is recommended to affirm these findings. A longitudinal approach is advisable. Additionally, further exploration into qualitative measures of skill set acquisition and retention to be correlated with student performance data would provide a more detailed picture of the impact of information literacy instruction on student success.