Our question: Does a library-based, Research Assistance (RA) program improve the academic success of readmitted Arts & Social Sciences students, strengthen their personal connection to the university, and thereby increase the likelihood that they will remain at Dalhousie to complete their degree?

What we know from the literature:

- Academic performance is the single most important factor affecting retention. A student’s personal connection to the university is another powerful factor. (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005)
- Research skills are crucial to academic success and many first year students lack these. (Kelly, 1995)
- One-on-one RA would therefore have an indirect positive effect on retention by impacting the factors above. (Bell, 2008; Blackburn, 2010)

Data Collection:
This project is part of the program “Assessment in Action: Academic Libraries and Student Success” which is undertaken by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in partnership with the Association for Institutional Research and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities. The program, a cornerstone of ACRL’s Value of Academic Libraries initiative, is made possible by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Survey Results: (response rate: 13/25)

When asked how else the RA impacted them and their studies, 8 of the 13 survey respondents gave an emotional impact. They said it made them feel...

Recommendations:

- One-on-one RA increases students’ personal connection with the university
- There is a correlation between 2 RA sessions (or RA sessions directly associated with an assignment) and better grades
- Based on research and theories in the literature, the above outcomes result in higher retention