

# Chapter 3

## “Everything to Gain”: K–12 and College Partnerships=Academic Success

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter seeks to provide an overview of how academic librarians at the University of South Dakota’s (USD) University Libraries are making steps to impact pre-college information literacy instruction and college preparation through collaborative outreach. There is much to be gained from establishing an ongoing dialog and formal relationships between academic librarians, campus programs, high school teachers, and school librarians. Using the existing literature and examples of partnership experiences, this chapter identifies best practices, which can improve student information literacy skills upon arrival at college, ensure students’ academic success, increase student retention rates and increase exposure of the institution.*

### INTRODUCTION

Campus collaboration or rather the lack thereof, is often an issue affecting departments in higher education (Perini, 2013). Organizational life in higher education can pull people apart rather than together (Lester, 2011). Even though instructors and librarians exist for the same reason—to educate—there can be real or perceived silos in education. The library has historically held a central position as the heart of the institution, community, or organization, and libraries are often the place where communities are brought together.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine ways in which academic librarians can build a community by developing strategic partnerships with campus programs, K-12 teachers, and school librarians to better prepare students for college-level research and to arm them with transferable information concepts and

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skills. In doing so, students will not only be college ready, they will be more likely to return to college after their freshmen year. Considering the role that information literacy plays in the success of college students, this chapter aims to increase academic librarians’ awareness of how “it takes a village”. More specifically, this chapter will add to existing research that calls for librarians and educators of all levels to work together as a community to promote information literacy.

## **BACKGROUND**

Poor funding and budget restraints have forced many school administrations to cut library budgets or cut librarian positions altogether. Although many states have mandated that each school employ a certified librarian, this mandate can be waived for any number of reasons. Teachers are now being asked to teach research skills as early as first grade as required by state standards that are grounded in the goal of college and career readiness. However, since current state standards were officially integrated into school curriculums in 2014, there will be a significant amount of time before professors and academic librarians have college-ready students in their classrooms.

College readiness has traditionally been defined as the absence of a need for remediation in math and English. More recently, the concept of college readiness has expanded to encompass four clearly defined aspects of college readiness: “cognitive strategies, content knowledge, self-management skills, and knowledge about postsecondary education” (Conley, 2008, para. 2). Many educational policy organizations such as Diplomas Count, Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and ACT emphasize the importance of students making connections among the big ideas—focusing on the *structure* of knowledge—to enable students to scaffold their understandings in a way that their college education can build on (Buddin & Croft, 2014; Editorial Projects in Education, 2010; Vockley, 2007).

### **South Dakota**

Twenty-eight percent of students who enter South Dakota’s public universities need to complete remedial work prior to enrolling in college-level courses in English and math (South Dakota Board of Regents, 2012). In a study of perceptions of South Dakota English instructors in both high school and college concerning the teaching of critical thinking skills, comments from the college instructors indicated a need for enhanced development of critical thinking in students in preparation for college readiness (Thurman, 2009). To promote the development of higher order thinking skills, the South Dakota Department of Education implements standards in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. These state content standards require the teaching of critical thinking in the English and language arts content areas in all secondary schools in South Dakota (South Dakota Department of Education, 2013a; 2014).

### **Literature Review**

In the library world, information literacy is defined as “the set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze and use information” (American Library Association [ALA], 1989, para. 3). Literacy has been more broadly discussed as specific skill-sets necessary to everyone’s social, economic, and healthy well-being (Kulthau, 1987; McTavish, 2009).

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