

Chapter 13

Concept, Conversion, Cultivation, and Consequence: The Four Cs of Successful Collaboration

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ABSTRACT

In an effort to change the librarian-faculty collaboration culture at Nicholls State University, librarians actively sought grant opportunities to make resources available to the university which would facilitate collaboration. Nicholls was able to secure grant funding for a collaborative multidisciplinary research workshop series to promote undergraduate research. The objective of this grant funded opportunity was to place the library in a central role in the enhancement and expansion of the university's research initiatives and partner with those disciplines that were traditionally self-contained. The technology and training made available to students through this initiative is important as it provides all students with access to foundational training and necessary technology to be competitive in academia and the workforce. Through these long-term partnerships forged with research focused disciplines, the library is now able to demonstrate its capacity to serve as an integral component of university research initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

Librarians and teaching faculty at Nicholls State University have partnered to create a sustainable grant-funded series of research workshops that promote research at the undergraduate and graduate level, as well as collaboration among faculty at the inter-departmental, inter-collegiate, and campus-wide level. This chapter will describe in detail the collaboration established between faculty and librarians on research workshops and will include a description of collaboration, the tenets or four C's of collaboration (concept, conversion, cultivation and consequence) that guided the initiative, and some tips and tricks that were learned along the way.

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BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Historically at Nicholls State University, a genuine collaborative culture did not exist between faculty and librarians. However, through librarian service and involvement on the University's Research Week committee, a common organizational objective was identified. Librarians and faculty saw an opportunity to work together to promote, enhance, and enlarge the technology, instruction, and research of students at Nicholls State University and promote one of the university's five strategic goals to "cultivate research that engages faculty and students seeking knowledge in areas of common interest." The resulting research workshop series discussed in detail in this chapter is the result of a concentrated and truly collaborative effort between teaching faculty and librarians.

Importance of Collaboration

Academic librarians have the opportunity to influence higher education through collaboration with teaching faculty. This is because "librarians are on the edges of research, on the first threshold where the researcher has an idea or a hunch about something but needs a guide to navigate the waters of inquiry" (Raspa & Ward, 2000, p. 6). Librarians are trained to serve as guides that often help to shape a research query and lead a student or researcher to appropriate information sources. Collaboration is an imperative at an academic university because it maximizes available resources during lean economic times.

Definition of Collaboration

Obtaining a high level of lasting and effective collaboration between academic librarians and teaching faculty is the unicorn that all academic librarians try to corral during their careers. In theory, collaboration should not be difficult to achieve, but in reality the process of collaboration is often riddled with barriers that can be difficult to overcome. In order to understand the process of collaboration, it is helpful to look at how various researchers define this term.

According to Raspa and Ward (2000), "Collaboration...is a more structured relationship that is created to solve a common problem. Collaboration goes beyond coordination by adding a structure that ensures a desired alliance actually meets its goal" (p. 27). In effect, collaboration is the highest level at which parties operate to solve a problem. Mattessich (2001) further expands the definition by saying collaboration is "a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. The relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards" (p. 59). Mattessich's definition, with its emphasis on mutual relationships and goals along with shared authority and accountability, serves as the basis for the collaboration discussed in this chapter.

Barriers to Collaboration

Barriers to collaboration can be both multi-faceted and difficult to pinpoint. People must put forth effort, time, and desire in order to collaborate successfully; when these are lacking in any capacity, collaboration can be difficult.

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