

Meeting Students Where They Are: Collaborating With Non-Traditional Departments on Campus

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter seeks to explore the myriad ways that libraries can leverage expertise to specifically enhance the services undergraduates receive at a large research university. Partnering with nontraditional campus units can expand on the traditional academic library liaison roles. The chapter highlights the development of three nontraditional campus collaborations with different entities on campus and how they were or are developing: Athletic Academic Affairs, the Experiential Learning Network, and Residence Education. The authors discuss the successes, challenges, and failures faced by the library and the new partners. The goal is to outline the ways other academic libraries can build collaborations of value with academic departments that are often overlooked.

INTRODUCTION

The University at Buffalo (UB) is a public Tier 1 Research Institute located in Western New York and is part of the State University of New York (SUNY) system. UB has been designated as the SUNY Flagship Institution. The university has approximately 21,000 undergraduates enrolled on an annual basis and most of these students attend in-person classes on the North, South, and Downtown Medical campuses. UB has an operating budget of \$711 million for the 2020-2021 academic year with 45% of that coming from student tuition (Division of finance and administration, 2021, p. 5). In addition, UB has seen the primary growth in its student population in resident undergraduate students. UB's undergraduate population is 48.7% White, 16.1% Asian, 11.9% International Students, 8.6% Black, 7.6% Hispanic, and the remaining 7.1% identify as other or multi-ethnic (College factual, 2022). This creates a diverse and culturally rich environment for students to explore and a place for information literacy to be taught. Undergraduates are encouraged to start becoming involved in research as early as their first semester and that only ramps up as they proceed through their coursework.

BACKGROUND

In 2016, a new undergraduate curriculum was developed and implemented at the University at Buffalo. Within the new undergraduate curriculum, a modern approach was taken to first-year composition and information literacy (IL). To provide the necessary instruction, the University Libraries created the Education Services team to offer their pedagogical expertise in providing IL education for incoming first-year students. These librarians played a significant role in shaping what would become *iLab*, a one-credit, information literacy lab embedded in a first-year student writing and rhetoric course called English 105 (ENG105). All instruction was scaffolded towards a final deliverable, using the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education for direction and guidance (Framework for information literacy for higher education, 2015).

iLab reached approximately 1,400 students per semester and roughly 60% of all undergraduates ended up taking *iLab*, usually as first-year students. Students were spread out on average through 90 class sections and approximately 70 of them were “standard sections” for native speakers of English, coordinated by the English Department, and approximately fifteen sections were strictly comprised of English Language Learners (ELLs), which were coordinated by the English Language Institute (ELI). All the sections ran with about 20 to 24 students per class. By 2017, the Education Services team grew to nine librarians to scale and deliver the content to all the *iLab* students.

Since 2016, the amount of face-to-face class time librarians had with students decreased in each standard section of *iLab*, beginning with 13 interventions and eventually decreasing to four interventions a semester by 2020. In addition, librarians were no longer responsible for one-credit hour of instruction with graded deliverables. This was due to the changing focus of the first-year composition course that *iLab* was attached to, as the English department started shifting towards a peer feedback model and wished to dedicate the credit hour to that instead. The Education Services librarians modified their intervention to be delivered as a scaffolded series of modules throughout the semester in each individual standard section of the first-year composition course. In contrast, the 15 sections run by ELI received 10 interventions with instruction and graded stakes. The ELI director still wanted the information literacy and research process taught in its entirety due to the difficulties English Language learning (ELL) students

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